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CHAPTER I

The Small Farmers

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CENSUSES have laid bare the existence of two widely different types of agricultural activity in the Irish countryside. There are two widely different groups of persons whom we can tentatively designate as large and small farmers. Indeed, the statistics, if used correctly, give factual base to the divisions the Irish reckon in the countryside themselves. They remind one continually that the large and small farmers are different beings and belong to ways of life which are quite opposed.

In general, the differences are such as to present two groups of persons defined by two different ways of adapting themselves to nature and carrying on the business of agricultural production. Large farmers differ from small farmers in their techniques, in their products, in the use of the soil and the land. They differ in the way in which numbers derive support from their farms. They differ significantly in the organization of labor upon those farms and presumably in consequence in their relations with other elements of the community. Family labor characterizes the small man, hired labor the big fellow.

No one, of course, expects this to be an exact correspondence in which one gets perfect correlations in each instance between the size of the acreage and other factors. A typical small farm economy might well exist on a farm very large in area, and often does so in mountainous areas, where

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241 463 much of the land is useless. Again, a farm small in area might be exclusively devoted to the sort of economy which is usually found on very large farms. In any single case, statistical generalities do not hold, of course. But in the large kind of correlation which a count of varying factors affords, bulk correspondences turn up with complete regularity.

241 463 162 The course by which this conclusion is reached takes one through the devious labyrinth of Free State Government statistical abstracts. In 1926, the last census year before the authors' field work was undertaken, the numbers living in country districts, "outside villages and towns with 200 or more population," made up 63 per cent of the Free State's population of almost 3,000,000. They were 1,815,496. Of the 1,307,662 classed as "occupied persons 12 years of age and over" for the whole Free State, 672,129, or 51 per cent, were engaged in agriculture. Any attempt, then, to understand the human setting of Irish farming involves an inquiry into the forces motivating the lives of well over half the country's people.

241 433 In 1926 this agricultural population produced a total output valued at £64,757,000. Industry in Ireland produced goods to the value of only a little over half that figure (£34,000,000 net output).

231 433 In the agricultural output of that year, the proportions of the various products indicate the character of the agriculture. Foodstuffs, with livestock products among them, made up the bulk of the output. Milk products accounted for £13,600,000; cattle, exported alive or slaughtered within the country, accounted for another £13,800,000. Pigs and eggs made up £9,800,000 and £6,690,000 respectively. Other livestock such as poultry, sheep, and horses accounted for the rest, in that order of importance. Wool and sundry items such as honey brought in a mere £700,000. All of these, the total output of livestock, reached a value of

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£50,555,000. The figures illustrate the preponderant importance of livestock and particularly cattle and pigs in Irish economy.

The remaining £14,000,000 was made up of crops and turf, the latter alone accounting for £5,938,000. Among the crops, potatoes came first, with a value for the year of £3,786,000. Oats, cabbage, and barley accounted for about £900,000 each; and there were a few other items of smaller values, the largest of which was fruit at £466,000.

These figures of the agricultural products rather underestimate the amount of tillage products raised. In the words of the Census Report, they "do not include any part of the produce which was used for further agricultural production in the Saorstat whether that part was used on the farm on which produced or sold by one farmer to another – e.g. milk fed to calves, potatoes fed to pigs, hay, turnips, mangels fed to cattle, corn used for seed, horses used for farm work." [1]

Within this generality of the monetary value of the goods produced, one can begin to take account of the wide difference of the sizes of the holdings engaged in this agricultural production. A glance at the figure illustrating this kind of economy by relative size of acreage (Fig. 1) will bring the matter out.

The agricultural community carried on this production upon farms of very widely different character. Holdings range in size from one acre or less to 500 or more. Those under 30 acres comprise 23 per cent of the total acreage of agricultural land in the Saorstat, those of 30–50, 17 per cent; those of 50–100, 24 per cent; and those of 100–200, 19 per cent. Farms larger than 200 acres cover only 16 per cent of agricultural land.

In general, the smaller ones practice the more generalized economy, their production being markedly different from

[1] *Agricultural Output of Saorstat Eireann, 1926–27* (Department of Industry and Commerce, Statistics Branch, Dublin Stationery Office, 1930), p. 5.

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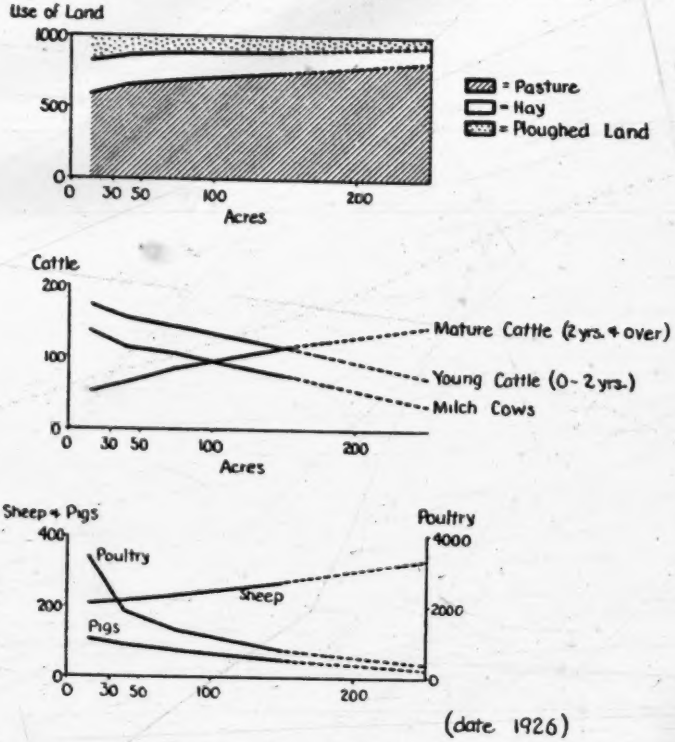
that of the large farms. The latter, especially in the midland counties, where they are most numerous, raise little more than beef cattle. Their owners are the graziers or

FIGURE 1

PRODUCTION ON LARGE AND SMALL HOLDINGS, ALL IRELAND, 1926 CENSUS



(date 1926)

"ranchers" of current political controversy in Ireland. The different economies express themselves in the census as follows:

The numbers of acres ploughed and the numbers under hay per 1000 acres of agricultural land decrease continuously as the size of the holdings increases; the numbers of milch cows, of

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young cattle, of pigs, and of poultry also decrease but the number of dry older cattle and of sheep per 1000 acres increase as the size of the holdings increases. The contrast between the smallest and the largest holdings is exceedingly great and is very great even between the second smallest and second largest. Contrasting the holdings 30–50 acres with holdings 100–200 acres the table shows that on equal areas of agricultural land, the smaller holdings have 32% more ploughed land, 29% more hay, 54% more milch cows, 53% more cattle under one year, 16% more cattle one to two years old, and 9% more cattle of all kinds, 80% more pigs, and 139% more poultry than the holdings 100–200 acres, but the latter have 24% more sheep, 52% more dry cattle, 2 to 3 years old, and 209% more dry cattle 3 years old or over than do holdings 30–50 acres.[2]

In County Clare, the area of our investigation, agriculture presents much the same character and the same difference between small and large farmers as does the whole of Ireland. Clare occupies a middle place among the counties; neither the large nor the small farm predominates. Almost always the small farmer has a garden in potatoes and cabbage with a few oats and turnips and perhaps some rye. The rest of his land will be under several meadows in hay, grazed during the winter months and in fields (pasture land) grazed during both summer and winter, if sheltered. In rough mountain areas sheep are common, particularly in the Broadford and Tubber districts. In addition to cattle, the smaller holder generally has a large flock of ducks, geese, and hens, and he keeps several pigs. These are also fed upon the oats, potatoes, cabbage, and milk left over after the other livestock have been fed. Specialization in poultry raising is still rare, though poultry stations are being established here and there under the supervision of agents of the Department of Agriculture. Certain areas, of course, show minor specializations, such as Miltown Malbay, a seacoast region known for its cabbage, and Newquay, known

[2] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926, Report and Tables* (Department of Industry and Commerce, Statistics Branch, Dublin Stationery Office, 1930), p. xxi.

for its oats; but an entire farm is seldom, if ever, devoted to one crop.

With few exceptions, then, the chief occupation of the small farmers is the production of cattle. Milk is sold direct to the creameries in areas where they have been established. It comes to occupy the largest part of farm production in such counties as Limerick, but in Clare the creameries are still being introduced. Where there is no creamery, the milk is used for food in the form of butter, or sold as fresh and salted butter in near-by centers, or it is fed to livestock. For the small farmer may keep several dry cattle and calves in addition to his milch cows.

The ideal is to have as much grass as possible, even with those small farmers who do most tillage. A farm is described among them as "the place of [so many] cows." For this reason, hay is the principal crop of the year; in all cases, it is an important fodder. Often it is the only winter fodder. The dependence upon hay is well exemplified for all Ireland in the fluctuation of the annual milk yield. It is at its highest through May, June, and July during the period of fresh grasses, and sinks to a low in January. The range is from 3 per cent of annual production in January to 13 per cent in June.

The large farmer, typically the so-called "rancher," a grazier of over 200 acres, presents a quite different picture, though he, too, is a great cattle producer. Ordinarily, he cultivates nothing but a "kitchen garden" for household use. He utilizes his land to its full capacity for grazing cattle. Ranching of this sort is typical of the midland counties such as Meath and the other counties of Leinster, but it is found also in certain areas of Clare. The first of these is the low-lying alluvial plain around the mouth of the river Fergus, very rich in grass-bearing soil. A concentration of large holdings is found there. The actual acreage of the holdings gives little information because of the difficulty of comparing

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Fergus River, where there are many "ranches" and, in parts, extensive oats tillage.

Statistics are available only for the whole of Clare; they give a comprehensive view of the county's farming.[3] All but 21.6 per cent of the population of 95,064 lived in country districts. The area they worked, 787,768 acres, was divided into 15,857 holdings, of which 1,179 did not exceed one acre, 909 contained from 1 to 5, 841 from 5 to 10, 1,108 from 10 to 15, and 3,767 from 15 to 30, 3,617 from 30 to 50, and 3,135 from 50 to 100. The farms larger than 100 acres numbered 997 in the 100 to 200 acre group, and 394 exceeding 200 acres. Clare thus fell into a category among counties in which medium-sized holdings were normal, but both the small farms and the large rancher type were present.

We have no separate statistics for Clare's produce, but we know that in June 1932 the land was being utilized in the following manner. There were only 465 acres of wheat, 335 acres of barley, 207 acres of rye, 1 acre of beans and peas, 147 acres of fruit, 3 acres of sugar beet, 57 acres of experimental ensilage for cattle, and 151 acres of miscellaneous root and green crops. The figures[4] show the small part played by vegetable products other than cabbage and potatoes used for human food. Bread, the great staple, was of course, made from imported flour or wheat. Potatoes and oats, however, made a better showing, with 13,518 and 8,199 acres respectively devoted to them. Turnips and mangels accounted for 3,897 and 306 acres respectively; like potatoes and oats, they are used for both human and animal consumption. This was the extent of ploughed land.

The great bulk of the area was, of course, in hay and pasture. There were 2,791 acres of first-year hay, 131,429 acres of other hay, and 394,791 acres of pasture.

[3] Figures taken from Annual Report, County Clare Council Agricultural Committee, June 1932.

[4] Report of the County Clare Agricultural Committee, 1932.

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These figures coupled with those giving the number of livestock in the county at that date illustrate the greatly preponderant interest in animal products, particularly cattle, pigs, and eggs. The figures for cattle show that Clare is not primarily a ranching county, but that there is, nevertheless, a respectable number of dry, store cattle. In June 1932 there were 786 bulls, 60,149 milch cows, and 1,696 heifers in calf; and besides such breeding stock there were 5,780 dry three-year-olds or over, 23,266 two-year-olds, and 47,918 yearlings. There were also 58,708 under a year old.

Returning again to the conditions for all Ireland, it will be seen in how many respects Clare duplicates the various types of agriculture for all Ireland. The Report of Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926, describes statistically the difference in farming between large and small holders over the whole country. It finds that for the whole country

> milch cows were densest (in 1926) in the Southwestern Counties [Clare is one], a region of medium sized holdings, next densest in the Northwest with its numerous small holdings and least dense in the Central Eastern Counties. . . . the 13 latter counties included 11 of the counties of the largest percentage of land under holdings of 200 acres or over, 11 of the 13 densest in dry cattle 3 years or over, 10 of the 13 densest in dry cattle 2 to 3 years old and 10 of the 13 densest in sheep. . . . the counties densest in the older dry cattle coincide closely with these densest in large holdings.[5]

Of tillage the Report states that

> small farmers adopt a crop rotation very different to that of the large farmers, putting much more of their ploughed land under roots and green crops and much less under corn. . . . Farmers with 1 to 30 acres devote to potatoes nearly three times as large a proportion of their ploughed land as farmers with over 200 acres, and the latter put twice as much . . . under barley and under turnips as the small farmer and a much larger proportion under oats and mangels.

[5] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926*, p. xxiii.

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241 As regards the smaller crops "the small farmers show a distinct preference for cabbage and rye. . . ." [6]

"Poultry are influenced more than any other class of livestock by size of the farm. . . . They are nine times as dense on holdings of 1 to 30 acres as on holdings over 200 acres. . . . counties densest in poultry coincide with the counties densest in small holdings. . . ." [7]

231 Pigs, however, "seem to be influenced more by densities of tillage and of milch cows than by size of holdings. . . . The Southwestern Counties [Clare is one of them] have dense pig herds and the largest bacon factories." [8]

241 407 The difference reflects itself likewise in the distribution of agricultural implements and machinery over the two types of farm. The figures, dating from 1917,[9] are two decades old, but, in spite of the subsequent increase in mechanization, Irish farming is little given to abundant use of machines, and proportions hold much as at that time. In the words of the Report in discussing the tables it presents, giving numbers of farm implements and machines, enumerating ploughs, harrows, turnip and mangel sowers, corn binders, mowers and reapers, horse-drawn hayforks, and potato diggers per thousand acres of ploughed land or specific crop, on various sized holdings:

> The figures rise regularly to a maximum (in the column representing holdings of 50 to 100 acres) and then fall away regularly. Small figures for the small holdings presumably mean that the less efficient implements are used, (the spade in place of the plough, the scythe instead of the mower), not that co-operation . . . exists to any appreciable extent.[10]

That large holders do not proportionately increase their use of such implements and machines after the 50 to 100 acre maximum is reached lies in the fact that "the small

[6] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926*, pp. xxvi, xxvii. [8] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*, p. xxvi. [9] *Ibid.*, p. lv.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. lvi. We shall see that this statement is not entirely accurate, though there is no large-scale village coöperation as in Balkan and Slavic lands.

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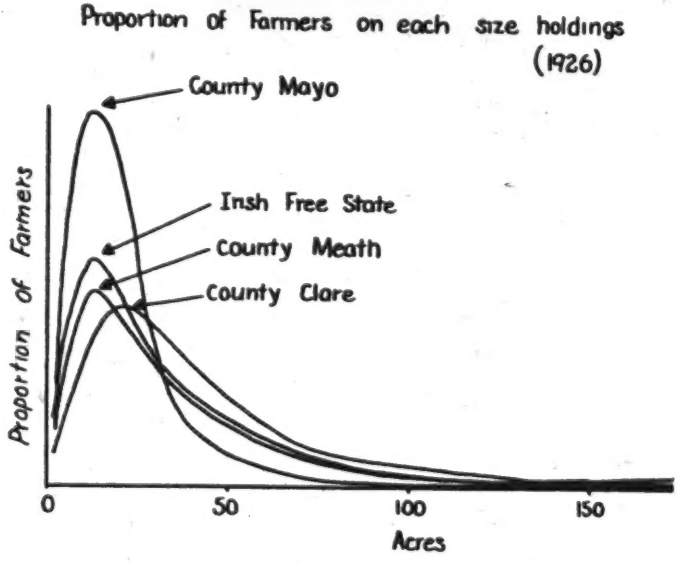
figures for the largest size holdings show that the machines on the smaller farms were more than sufficient for the type of agriculture carried on." [11] For instance, on farms of 30–50 acres there were 137 ploughs to every 1,000 acres of ploughed land. But much less than half that number were

FIGURE 2



sufficient for the same acreage of ploughed land on holdings over 500 acres. The difference reflects itself statistically not only in the goods produced but in the tools and techniques used.

More important, however, for an understanding of the social behavior involved, is a further great difference to be seen in the numbers of persons living upon the various sized farms. The numbers of persons supporting themselves upon the small holdings are much greater than those upon

[11] *Ibid.*

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large farms. Figure 2 shows this graphically. County Mayo there represents one extreme of "congestion" and County Meath another. County Clare is of such mixed character that its position looks anomalous. The figure deals only with farmers and does not, as we shall see, represent the real situation, for it leaves out of account those who work the farm along with its farmer owner.

In 1926 there were 268,930 farmers in the Irish Free State, the largest block of which supported themselves upon farms of from 15 to 30 acres, that is, upon small farms. Their number was 75,225. Farmers numbering 51,196 worked farms of from 30 to 50 acres, and 41,052 farms of from 50 to 100. On smaller farms than the 15–30 acre norm there were 11,608 farmers on 1–5 acre farms and 29,180 on 5–10 acre ones. On larger farms than 100 acres there were, however, only 22,660 farmers.

The counties, of course, differed widely in this respect, but in general the counties where large holdings were numerous supported a much smaller farm population than those where smaller holdings prevailed. Thus Meath, a ranching county of 577,000 acres, supported only 4,403 farmers, while Clare, with an area only about one and one-half times as large, supported 10,320 farmers in a much less rich and more mountainous soil. Indeed, it is one of the anomalies most regretted by the present De Valera government (among others) that Ireland's population is concentrated in the poorer and more mountainous parts of the island. Clare, of course, does not present such an extreme case as the so-called "congested" counties of Mayo, Kerry, and Galway.

In County Clare small farmers are, of course, definitely in the majority. The number of true "ranchers" is few. In 1926 the proportions were 3,020 male farmers on farms 15–30 acres (the largest group), 2,280 on farms 30–50, 2,033 on farms 50–100. In the groups smaller than 15 acres

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there were 828 farmers on farms 10–15 acres and 486 on farms 5–10. Farmers living on farms under 5 acres are few (180). Those on farms up to 200 number 597 and above 200, 218.

When the total population engaged in agriculture is considered rather than merely the farmers (owners), the greater numbers living upon small holdings become even more apparent. A full report based upon the 1926 census had not yet appeared, but a report was published upon the 1912 figures at the time the 1926 figures were released.[12] From that report it is at once apparent that the difference between large and small farms extends to the population engaged upon them and the type of labor employed. This new difference demonstrates a marked contrast, still apparent today, in the way in which large and small farmers carry on their economies.

In 1926 the number of farmers and relatives assisting them in the Saorstat was 533,025 and those otherwise engaged in agriculture numbered only 139,104. The figures of the Report, based upon the 1912 census, show higher numbers, but the proportion of hired to family labor had not materially changed. From the tables of the Report, it is established that "only 26% were wage earners," that is, were not farmers and their relatives, working without periodic monetary recompense on an employee basis. Relating this to size of farms, it was discovered that not only were "5 times as many persons working on farms of 15 to 30 acres and 3½ times as many on farms of 30–50 acres as on farms of over 200 acres," [13] but that also "family labor accounted for 89% of the total on farms 1–15 acres but only 24% for farms of over 200 acres. . . . Taking all holdings into account, 74% of the persons working on farms consisted of farmers, their wives, sons, daughters, and other relatives," and only "15% were permanent wage earners and 11%

[12] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926*, p. liv. [13] *Ibid.*, p. li.

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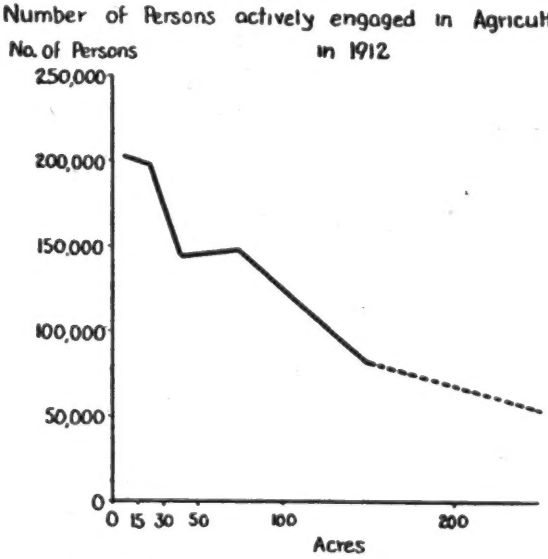
were temporary employees." [14] In other words, the small farm is generally worked by the family of the owner, while the large farm, particularly the ranch, is worked by agricultural laborers employed by the owner.

FIGURE 3



These are the actual numbers arranged proportionately, in true descending scale, with the size of the holding. Figures for all Ireland. The figures are quite comparable with those of County Clare for 1932, where in records published in the local newspaper by the County Council Committee on Agriculture it was stated that on farms of 15–30 acres, the median-sized holding,' on which the plurality of the farm population live, there were 10 acres to each person. But on farms of 200 acres and over, more than 35 acres were required for each person the farms supported.

In Figure 3 the tables are reduced to a graphic representation which shows well how much truth there is in the Irish assertion that "the smaller the farm, the larger the number of people it supports." One has only to look at it to understand much of Irish political currents.

[14] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926*, p. lii.

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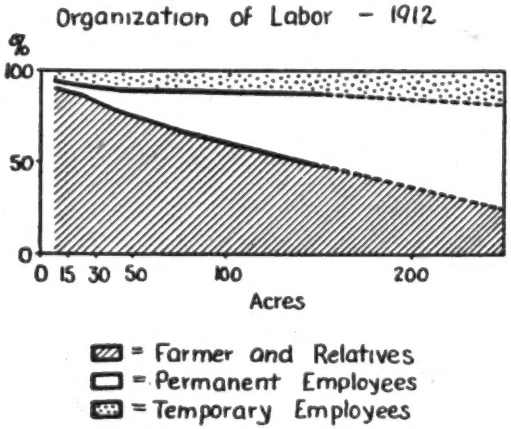
In Clare the same situation is present. Most, if not nearly all, of the work of the small farmers is done by the family relatives. And for the whole county in 1926, 83.5% of all males engaged in agricultural pursuits were farmers or farmers' relatives (and 99 per cent of the rather small number of females). Only in the two districts which we have

FIGURE 4



The chart again shows a constant progression. The larger the farm, the less the dependence upon other members of the family and the more often hired hands are present. The chart begins on the left with a figure of 89 per cent of farmers of 1–15 acres depending upon family help and ends at the right with 24 per cent of farmers of over 200 acres depending upon such help.

already mentioned as regions of large holdings and ranches, Ballyvaughan and Ennis, did the percentage fall appreciably below that figure (to 73 per cent and 75 per cent).

Figure 4 presents this difference in organization of labor for all Ireland in 1912.

Small farmers and large farmers make a different disposal of their products. At the same time there is an exchange of products between the two groups.

These facts are to be got from the many statistics reflect-

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ports were live animals and live animal products, such as butter.

Of these exports, of course, cattle were the most valuable item and represented the great export staple. They were likewise the crop to which most other produce could be devoted when not used as human food. That this kind of conversion of other stuffs into cattle could take place is to be seen in the figures for milk. Though the Free State produced in the year in question a total of 589,000,000 gallons of milk, including both whole milk and butter, comparing favorably with such an output as Switzerland's yearly 528,000,000 in 1923, only 43 per cent of it was exported, while in Switzerland the export was 67 per cent of the Swiss total.

The figures for exports introduce a new factor of difference between the holdings of large and small size and their populations. Small holdings do not share equally with large holdings either in the consumption of agricultural produce or in its export. In both consumption and export commerce in the Free State, small holders and large holders play distinct roles.

Taking the first of these considerations, the figures for consumption reveal the difference. The estimated human consumption of whole milk (as milk) was some 90,000,000 gallons, according to the statistical record of the year 1928,[17] of which 70,000,000 gallons were consumed by agriculturalists and 20,000,000 by the remainder of the population. It was estimated that on the farms 38 gallons were consumed yearly per person. But that is the figure for all farms. There is a considerable difference here between types of farms.

Thus, in this case, on farms less than 50 acres only 36 gallons per person per annum were consumed, it was estimated, while on farms of over 50 acres, the consumption was 42 gallons. In Munster, the chief milk-producing province,

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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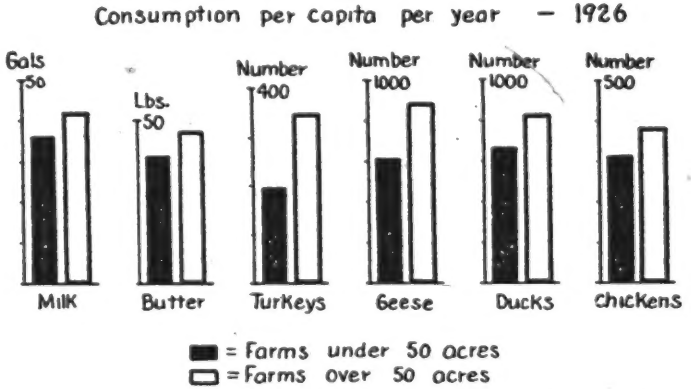
the difference is even more marked, the indices being 35 gallons and 44 gallons.

Similar differences hold as well for the consumption of milk as butter, a commodity of which the Irish consume more than any other civilized country. The difference between farms under and farms over 50 acres can be expressed in the spread between 40 and 48 pounds annual consumption per person. For poultry and for eggs, great farm diet staples, similar differences hold. On farms less than 50 acres, 197 turkeys, 601 geese, 672 ducks, and 3,177 ordinary

FIGURE 5



Notice that in each instance the smaller farms produce more, consume less. The great "money crop," cattle, which neither party consumes to any great degree, tells another story.

fowls, we are told, were consumed in the year in question, for every 1,000 persons living on such farms; while on farms over 50 acres, 325, 884, 873, and 3,823 are the respective figures. "As might be expected, the difference between average consumption on large and small farms of valuable fowl like turkeys is very marked." [18]

In the case of eggs, of those consumed per 100 persons on

[18] *Agricultural Output . . . , 1926–27*, p. 37.

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farms in January 1929,[18] the figures are for small farms 530, for large farms 582. All of these figures reflect a difference of diet the more marked because the small farmer population is so much the larger.

In Figure 5 this difference of consumption is represented in the form of blocks depicting the contrast between small and large farms. One could conclude quite rightly from this kind of picture that in each instance the smaller farms produce more per person at work and eat less. In terms of production, then, the small farm is the more productive. In terms of monetary return, it is a different story. Cattle, of course, are the Irish "money crop," much like cotton and wheat in parts of the United States.

Observation makes it clear that this difference of diet is more marked than even these figures reveal. But figures for other items of diet appearing in agricultural production are not available in correlation with farm size. The home consumption of meats from the farm animals, except pigs, is negligible among both kinds of farmers. Nevertheless, we can gain a substantial insight into the difference in meat-eating between large and small farmers when we realize that, out of the comparatively small total of 123,000 cattle and 504,000 sheep and lambs slaughtered for consumption in the Free State in 1926, a per capita count of average consumption by dressed weight gives such a predominantly large-holding county as Westmeath a weight of 34 pounds per consuming person, counties with large urban population rising higher, while the same count gives such a predominantly small-holding county as Mayo a weight of only 13 pounds. Clare, where small and medium farmers are predominant in the population, shows a similar small consumption of meat, a similar count giving only 19 pounds per person.[19]

In fact, the large farm population shares a meat diet with

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 48 and 49.

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241 262 511 the cities and larger towns that is unknown on the small farms. The fact is evident when it is observed that Dublin, Cork, and Waterford counties (each dominated numerically by the city of the name) count an average meat consumption taken on the same scale of 69, 40, and 37 pounds per capita respectively.

231 241 439 The difference between the two kinds of farm shows itself again strongly in the export trade from Ireland and in the roles of each in the transfer of farm produce to its ultimate market. The two kinds of farm make a totally different disposal of their produce, particularly their cattle. In this fact we see for the first time that in some regard they have a complementary role. Between them Irish cattle trade is carried on.

231 438 The huge internal Irish cattle trade is thus significant. It reveals itself in the figures as a movement from small farm to large, an interchange between the two kinds of farmers which shows once again their distinctness. The trade is both geographical and social, in the sense that it flows between two sections of Ireland and between her two great agricultural classes.

To get at the facts which show the case demands looking at the statistics of cattle in the Free State. These illustrate clearly how far the internal cattle trade shows up the great difference between the two types of farm. It is necessary to take into consideration the age groups of cattle in the various areas and in the possession of holders of various acreages in those areas. This roundabout course of determining the outlines of internal cattle trade is necessary because there are no barriers or *octrois* at which count might be made as the cattle move from dealer to dealer across the country.

231 The seven southwestern counties are the areas predominant in milch cattle production; they are the areas of the calf-producing cow. Clare is one of these. A chart of birth dates of cattle in various parts of Ireland demonstrates that

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CHAPTER II

Small Farm Economy

THE small farmers' family groups inhabit the holdings or plots of land from which they make the livelihood we have described numerically. Except in a few and special cases, there is no physical separation of house plot from fields; the individual family's plot is usually a continuous one, and the other forms of settlement present in Ireland are rapidly being reshaped with that condition as the ideal. Consequently, the farmhouse is most often, though not always, a comparatively isolated house standing upon its own ground and forming an integral part of the holding. In it the farm family group spends its entire life, sleeping, eating, giving birth and dying there, and sallying forth every day for work upon the fields.

The farm family lives and performs almost all of its work within this spatial unit of land and house. And the unit is identified with the family in the eyes of its community in name and ownership. Outside this range, the farmer has little participation in affairs in comparison with others of the population. His wife and children have even less. Within this range most of the activity marking the relations of the human beings who make up the group takes place.

The "land," as we have seen, is usually divided into "field," "meadow," "garden," "bog," and "mountain," according to its character and agricultural use. These divisions make up the holding and represent the productive

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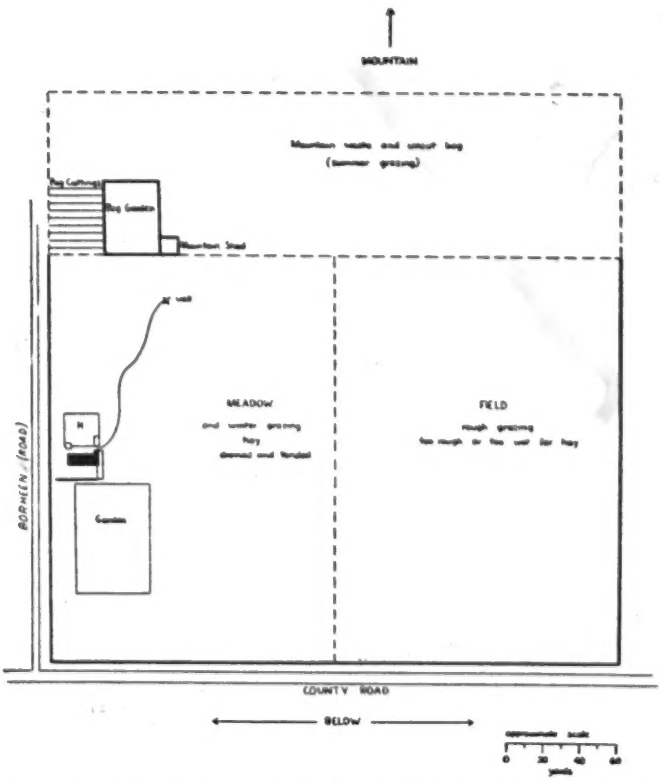
FIGURE 8

Diagrammatic Schema
of Small Farm
LUOGH
30 ACRES



Schematic representation (not to scale) of composite Clare farm of about five to fifty acres.

[p. 32]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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activities in small farm economy. The plots so designated 231
are devoted, respectively, to cattle-grazing, hay, tillage crops 241
for human and animal consumption, and turf for fuel, and 311
rough summer grazing. Nearer the house is the farmyard or "haggard," in which the hayrick and turfrick are and other supplies, such as potatoes stored in straw bins, stand ready for household and farm use.

The house opens directly into the haggard. There are 231
the cabins, in which the cattle are housed, and the various 343
sheds and stalls, often built out of the dry masonry of the 351
house itself, in which the farm machines, traps, sidecars, carts, and other vehicles are kept. Hens and other poultry roam at will through the haggard and are fed and housed there, and in one of the sheds the pig or pigs find their quarters. As for the house itself, which gives orientation to the haggard and is responsible for the spatial arrangements in it, we shall have occasion to discuss it somewhat later.

Figure 8 gives a schematic view of the kind of farm called 231
"all-purpose land" by the Irish Land Commission. This view 241
is a composite and represents no single farm, but it is taken 311
from direct observation of many in Clare. It depicts a mountain farm in which bog land is included. Otherwise it would do for any area.

Figure 9 gives a schematic view of a house and haggard 342
also in Clare. This is modeled after a house in which one of 343
the authors spent considerable time as a guest, and is carefully and faithfully depicted. But it serves, too, as a general 351
plan for all such houses of small farmers.

The daily activity of the farm family and the daily work 512
which its members carry on center round the house and haggard. Even for the men, whose primary work lies in the fields, gardens, and meadows, work centers in and round the house for a good part of the year. A short sketch of the daily activity which may be observed in any peasant farmhouse will throw into relief the work done by the various

[text continues on p. 35]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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labors, for all the tasks not strictly connected with the household fall in their province. We shall have occasion later to examine fully the sexual dichotomy of labor such a division of tasks represents.

For the countryman the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to Epiphany or "Little Christmas" (January 6), is the dead of winter. It is a period in which all farm work is at a standstill. The farmer has completed the last of his harvest and brought in the last of his potatoes from the field. The cattle are securely housed against the winter cold. The farmer feels himself free to sit round the house during the cold wet days and devote his season to holiday. The working day is at its shortest. Outside, the weather is usually unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. It is for him as though the course of the year had stopped and were waiting, gathering its forces for the new year.

It is a period of great social activity in the local community. The very important religious ceremonies of the season call forth an intensified activity in the parish. There are constant visits back and forth; each house is ready to offer its hospitality to its neighbors; and the community gives itself over to dances, cards, talk, and calls. Not until the religious season closes with Epiphany does the countryman feel that the year begins anew.

With the beginning of the year, the cold uncertain weather with its succession of bitter wet days, leaving the *fields too wet to work, does not end, but the Christmas* season has marked the transition. The farmer must now make his plans for the spring planting, lay in his seed, repair machinery, and make ready for the season about to begin. On drier days he can busy himself in the field in cleaning ditches and drainages. In the evenings much of the conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting, and both new and traditional experience with

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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types, varieties, growth cycles, yields, and care of seeds and cattle passes round by word of mouth.

The first of February, St. Brigid's Day, marks the beginning of spring. For the countryman the return of the "hard" days of wind and clear weather herald the season of the land's drying off. Through February and March the gardens must be prepared, potatoes planted, and the fields made ready for the return of the cattle to them. Each hard day is a welcome opportunity, for only then can work in the fields go on. With favorable weather, the work of preparation is over in the beginning of March, and the actual planting begins. By St. Patrick's Day, with its promise of continuous hard weather, the gardens are ready for a second planting.

The potatoes demand the greatest attention. A fortnight after they are planted, they must be manured well with manure brought from the pile near the cattle cabins, and the ground must be leveled so that the plant will not go to stalk and thus fail to produce tubers. A fortnight more and the ground must be "softened" and the earth round the plant, which now shows its first leaves, must be "stirred." By the time May is reached, the potatoes must be "landed." Earth must be taken from between the long ridges in which the potatoes are planted and heaped up over them from each side. Thereafter nothing remains until the harvest but a summer spraying against blight.

Throughout the spring the cattle have demanded attention. March and April see the birth of calves and the beginning of the milk season and intensified butter-making. The great spring cattle fairs take place. The farmer must devote himself to the all-important business of buying and selling his milch and store cattle and his calves. At home the cattle demand constant care against hunger, disease, and cold as he mixes their diet of fast diminishing hay with the slowly returning pasture grass.

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The farmer's work in the gardens does not end with the "landing of the potatoes." Mangels and turnips and whatever grains he may grow must be planted, the soil prepared for them, and the growing crop weeded and tended. With the planting of the turnips, the last crop to be "put down," often as late as early June, his planting season is over.

With the return of warm weather and the drying off of the land, Irish summer begins. May is the first summer month. And by early May the bogs are dry enough to allow turf cutting to begin. The farmer must ordinarily find time between plantings to cut his year's supply of fuel and stack it into "reeks" to dry under the summer warmth. The turf cutting, though not connected with growing plants or animals, is an indispensable farm activity and takes its place among the never varying tasks of the agricultural round.

Once the turf is cut and stacked, the fruits of the farmer's labor begin to appear. His first crop is cabbage which was planted in a small garden near the house at odd free times during the early spring. Cabbage is practically the only green vegetable of the small farm diet, and the old people remember "Hungry July" or July *an chabáiste* when a delayed potato crop might condemn them to a month or more of semistarvation in which cabbage was the only food. Today new varieties of potatoes have been introduced which mature as early as late June.

The mature potatoes mark no harvest. They are left in the ground to be turned out of the ridges with spade or plough as occasion for them demands. Not until late November will the last of them be dug up.

The first true harvest and the most important one of the year is the haymaking. The cutting of hay begins in late July or early August. It is not only the most important activity of the year, insuring a year-long supply of fodder for the farm animals and the income-producing cattle, but it is

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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221 246 also one that calls forth the united efforts of the whole family. It is a race, too, against time and rainy weather, and every effort must be bent to mow, rake, and let dry, and stack the meadow grasses, first in small haycocks, then in a great hayrick in the haggard, before rain brings rot to the lush crop. The farmers well speak of the harvest as "saving the hay."

221 241 [407 556] No sooner is the hay saved than the corn crops demand attention. Rye and oats are ready for the scythe or the mowing machine (only the larger farmers have reapers) by late August. The farmer and his sons must bind it, stack it, and leave it for several days drying. Later they will return to the fields and cart it back to the haggard for threshing. Not long ago the flail was still the most frequent means of threshing among the small farmers. In recent years steam-[407] powered threshing machines make the rounds, and threshing, which under the older system seems to have taken place as need arose for the grain, takes place now more regularly in late September and early October.

221 241 251 With the bringing in of the corn, the agricultural year draws to a close. Through October and November turnips and mangels are ready to be "pulled" and stored in the fields, near at hand to the haggard, in straw- and earth-covered pits. The potatoes which remain in the ridges must be turned up with spade and plough and similarly stored for the winter. All the root crops are indispensable supplies for men and animals during the months to come when there is no grass. The winter's supply of turf must be brought to the haggard from the reeks alongside of the bogs, where it [492] has been drying for the summer. The carting is an intermittent labor, performed by the men at odd times when they are free of other duties. As winter comes with November cold and rain, the cattle must be housed and made ready 221 231 for the long, dark days of no grass to come; and the farmer is busy with them acquiring and disposing of his stock, as

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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he was in the spring, for the autumn fairs bring him an important market.

If he has been fortunate and industrious, nothing remains for him to do but to prepare his fields for the next year. The soil he has used for root crops must be turned, and the gardens which he intends for grain are ploughed. As he follows the furrows, he can look back upon a year ended, and forward to another to begin. By the time his ploughing is finished, the dead of winter and the holiday season of Christmas is upon him and the yearly round is over.

Yet it is over only to repeat itself. For within the range of the seasonal variation and the demands of growing and maturing crops and animals the pattern of farm work in haggard, garden, meadow, and field is a constant one. Much the same progression of labor flows along year after year, and follows the farmer from boyhood till death. Yet there is much less restriction in choice of operation to be performed, in movement over space, in the possibility of day-to-day variation than in the case of the work of the household.

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the division of labor between males and females is regarded as corresponding to the natural propensities of the two sexes. That a man should concern himself with a woman's work, such as the sale of eggs or the making of butter, is the subject of derisive laughter, while a woman's smaller hands make it "natural" for her to be a better hand at milking the cows.

Even when the communal labor of the family is demanded and women take their place in bog, garden, and meadow, a definite role is assigned them. Usually it is the lighter tasks which are known as women's work. There is no formal taboo confining a woman to women's work. Heavy work is merely felt to be a hardship upon her. At the potato planting the women do the arduous work of planting the sprouts which they have prepared, bending over to put them into the ridges prepared by the men. They do their share, if necessary, of cultivating, but they are not generally accustomed to the spade, which like the plough, the harrow, the mower, scythe, and turf "slan" is regarded as a masculine implement. At the potato lifting they go along behind the man who turns the potatoes out of the ridge with spade and plough, and pick them up. At the haymaking, the pitching, raking, and some of the building of the haycocks are left to them. But the mowing, especially where it involves the horse-drawn mowing machine, and the building of the rick in the haggard, are masculine skills. In all cases of field work of this sort the role of the woman is usually auxiliary. The same holds in turf cutting. The men do the actual cutting in the bog trenches, while the women knead the peat into briquets and pile it for drying.

The many attitudes and beliefs which surround this type of division of labor illustrate again the socially determined character of the distinctions and their genesis in the intersexual relationship. Just as the man's work is the harder, the more various, and the wider in scope, so the attitudes express a greater valuation of the men's work within the

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241 462 626 183 461 limits of the restriction. Thus on several occasions the authors have heard men admonish a woman for interruption with such phrases as: "Woman, be silent while we [men] are talking about ploughing." Ridicule and laughter greet suggestions that either sex busy itself with the work of the other, though in the case of a woman doing a man's work some of the praise bestowed upon surprising successes meets her if she does it well. There is also an entire body of popular belief and superstition surrounding the dichotomy in farm labor.

462 593 183 626 These beliefs and attitudes serve to uphold the conventional division and to evaluate the necessary behavioral specialization which is basic to the interrelationships within the farm family. The connection between family status and labor performed brings about an identification between them. Ridicule and graver charges of unmanliness and unwomanliness can be brought to reaffirm the conventions against the offender in either sphere. Just as in the noneconomic life of the family, behavior is enjoined upon members on the basis of sex, so, when the group acts in economic enterprise, different but complementary roles become conventional for each sex. The interesting point is the identification. For the farm family, farm work is as much a family matter as is sharing the same table.

462 593 561 Within the framework of the division of labor on the basis of sex, there is another just as great division on the basis of age differences. Though all the males of the farm family share the work which is regarded as the masculine province, there can be immediately observed great differences in the practice of the masculine technique by the male family members; the same can be observed in the feminine province.

These further divisions of tasks likewise reflect family status. They are part of the behavior expected of the farmer as a family member, and take their form in the complex of

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574 602 "put down before" the countryman who is traveling to town or to the fair or who is merely making the evening *cuaird*, or visit, at which the older men of the local community gather round the hearth to chat and retell the old stories of legend and folklore and discuss the news. Niggardly treatment in this regard leads to disputes, as does abuse of the privilege by the visitor. A standing joke in Luogh was the treatment given to her too-voracious relatives there by a woman who exercised considerable ingenuity in starving them out without offending them.

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574 602 273 Similarly, the obligations extend to such occasions of good fellowship and holiday as the fair day and market. "Friends" treat one another at the local public houses on meeting in town. Thus one countryman complained to the authors that he dreaded the fair day, for he must drink up all his profits with his "friends." Others are able to strike a happier balance; and a religious pledge of teetotalism likewise surmounts the difficulty.

241 594 182 The sum of the evidence presents the small farm economy as a family situation in which economic effort, individual and coöperative, is controlled by the social forces operative within the family. Labor connected with agriculture is merely one feature of a total constellation of behavior, enforced through obligations reciprocal in nature and maintained by sentiments and sanctions in a traditional setting.

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the great burst of the fifties and has been continuous ever since.

Many attempts have been made to find causes for this emigration. Perhaps the most successful have been those dealing with economic factors. Among the most frequently suggested is the change in agriculture since the famine. The assumption advanced is that the change from tillage to livestock production has cut down the rural employment, which in turn has driven the rural population to emigrate. Undoubtedly, there has been a correlation, particularly in the earliest years and at the time of the land clearances after the famine. In fact, from 1847 to 1852 (the famine years) there was a huge decrease in the area under small holdings of 1–30 acres, a decrease of 1,395,000 acres, but since then, in the years from 1852 to 1909 (after which holdings began generally to be increased), the corresponding decrease was only 155,000 acres.

The Report on Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926, published by the Free State Department of Agriculture and Commerce, from which the figures are derived, comments that "this comparatively small transference of land from small holdings with high densities to larger holdings with low densities had but little effect upon reducing tillage or increasing livestock," [2] the agricultural changes which are supposed to have affected emigration. The Report demonstrates that between 1854 and 1912 the smaller the holding, the larger the increases in densities of all livestock, except dry cattle two years old and over, and the larger the decrease in density of ploughed land.

In other words, the change in agriculture, whatever may have been its effect upon employment prospects for the small farmer outside his own farm, proceeded more rapidly on the small farms. The tables of the Report show that large farmers decreased their tillage at a more rapid rate than

[2] *Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926*, p. xliii.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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small farmers only in the periods of 1917 to 1926 and 1854 to 1874, while continuously over the whole period 1874 to 1926 small farmers "got out of tillage more rapidly than large farmers." Too close appeal accordingly cannot be made to changes in agriculture for an understanding of Irish emigration.

In fact local densities of population do not now and never have shown a great deal of correspondence with densities of tillage. The highest percentage of agricultural land ploughed (29 per cent) was reached in 1851. Since then it has fallen steadily, to 13 per cent in 1926. Sweden comes nearest to this low percentage of tillage, with 52 per cent of her arable land tilled. Consequently, the Irish population was at no time solely dependent upon tillage crops.

Before 1881 a correlation could be drawn with some accuracy between the decrease in tillage and the decrease in rural population. Thus in poor law unions (administrative areas) in which ploughed land decreased population also decreased as shown in Table 1.[3]

TABLE 1

RELATION BETWEEN DECREASE IN PLOUGHED LAND AND DECREASE IN POPULATION

Decrease in Ploughed Land (per cent)	Decrease in Population (per cent)
0–20	13
20–30	26
30–40	28
50 and over	34

But since 1881 similar tables show that there is no correspondence between the decreases, and that even those poor law unions in which tillage has increased show an ordinary loss of population. Consequently, decline in tillage had little effect upon emigration after 1881. This becomes even more evident when it is understood that in both 1854

[3] *Ibid.*, p. lxi.

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and 1912 the thirteen counties densest in rural population included only six of the counties densest in ploughed land. "Dense tillage was in the east, dense rural population in the west," [4] as it still is.

In the same search for economic causes, a better case has been made for the change from milch cattle to beef cattle production. As we have seen, milch cows are characteristically associated with the small farmers. During the period of emigration, the number of dry cattle has risen in proportion to the number of milch cattle almost steadily; the range is from 2,372 total cattle to the 1,000 milch cows in 1854, to 3,334 to the 1,000 in 1926; fluctuations have been very slight. It is true that the number of milch cattle has also risen steadily, if slowly. Such a change in actual numbers of cattle and in proportions of dry to milch cattle, the latter capable of yielding the greater amounts of food for farm consumption, may have had some effect upon the displacement of human beings by cattle, but certainly not a great enough one to determine the emigration. The lack of correspondence between these changes is evident when it is remembered that the change has taken place principally in the former tillage areas, and also that in 1926 the areas of greatest milch cow density were substantially the same as in 1854. The very little direct correspondence there can be is well exemplified in the contrast between County Clare, which fell from a population of 336 to the 1,000 acres of crop and pasture to 129, while milch cows remained practically the same in number (100 to 110 to the 1,000 acres). and County Mayo (a poorer region), where population fell only from 375 to 245 and milch cows also remained practically the same (90 to 100).

From these figures it is evident that the decline in rural population is not directly correlated with decline in tillage or change in cattle production. The failure of employment

[4] *Ibid.*, p. lvi.

5: Ó Danachair I-5 (no date) 1956 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Irish Farmyard Types

CAOIMHIN Ó DANACHAIR

DUBLIN

121 The fundamental need of shelter from the elements and protection during the hours of darkness is doubled for the farmer, who must provide shelter and protection for his livestock, his gear and his harvested crops as well as for himself and his family; the type of shelter which he provides is influenced not only by his traditional methods of using building materials but also by the type of husbandry in which he engages, the local conditions of soil and climate, and his own social and economic position in the community.

132 The climate of Ireland is mild and moist. The average January temperatures range from 40° to 251 44° F. over the whole country, while those of July range from 57° to 60°, and the average annual rainfall over five-sixths of the country is from 30 to 50 inches, with from 175 to 250 days on 231 which some rain falls. Heavy snow, great cold or long continued frosts are very exceptional, as are long droughts or great heat. In such a mild climate hay and unthreshed corn may be stored outdoors in ricks or stacks, and this was the usual method of storage in Ireland until quite recently; it still is the usual method on many farms. Other crops, such as potatoes and roots, and even grain and apples were, in many parts of Ireland, stored outdoors in suitable pits or containers; this, too, is still often done in the case of potatoes. Consequently storage space for the harvested crops was not the most urgent of the farmer's building needs. Again, the mildness of the climate permits the keeping in the open throughout the year of certain kinds of livestock, such as sheep and dry cattle, while on the other hand milking cows must be kept indoors during the winter and early spring. Thus it may be said that, in general, the size and form of an Irish farmyard depends upon the number of milking cows kept by the farmer.

234 Although, in Ireland, the raising of crops, especially of grain crops, was neither small in volume or unimportant in rural economy, it was in most times and places secondary to cattlebreeding, stock-raising and dairying. The evidence of archaeology and history reveals the importance of cattle from a very early date down to our own time; even yet, in many parts of the country a man's wealth is reckoned not by the size of his farm but by the number of his cattle, and the area of a farm is commonly reckoned by the number of cattle which it will support—"the grass of ten cows" is still a familiar term.

311 Farms are generally classified as small, medium or large, according to their area. A farm of less
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than 30 statute acres is regarded as small, one of from 30 to 100 acres as of medium size and one of over 100 acres as large. Small, medium and large farms may be found in all parts of Ireland, but in the provinces of Leinster and Munster and in parts of south east Connaught there is a preponderance of medium sized farms with, especially in north Leinster, a considerable proportion of large farms.[1] All this area practises mixed farming, but the south western province, Munster, is completely dominated by the milking cow, while in Leinster the northern half is mainly devoted to the raising of beef cattle, and the southern half produces considerable quantities of wheat, oats and barley.[2] In most areas of Connaught and Ulster, the western and northern provinces, the average farm is of small size, and the number of cows kept by each farmer correspondingly small; the value and productivity of these small farms, however, vary greatly from the intensive cultivation of many farms in east and south Ulster to the fisher-farmer economy of the west coastal districts.[3]

Throughout the provinces of Leinster and Munster, and in parts of east Connaught, that is to say, generally in the area of medium and large farms, the predominant, and in many districts exclusive, farmyard type is the courtyard, in which the dwelling house and outhouses are arranged about a rectangular space which is the farmyard proper. Most usually the buildings form three sides of the yard, with the dwelling house forming one side and the outhouses forming two more, the fourth side being closed by a wall with a gate. Usually the building is not continuous, the elements being separate and connected by walls, or having gateways or passages between them. The size and arrangement of the yard and the various buildings vary from one farm to another, and also from district to district; the general type is, however, well established, and conforms to a pattern which is clearly distinguished from the other types to be described later. In many districts the front of the dwelling house faces the farmyard, thus, in Co. Kildare in 1807: "The farmhouses in general consist of a long thatched building of one storey, consisting of a large kitchen and fireplace in the centre, and lodging rooms at either end; the front door looks to the barns and stables on the right, behind which is the haggard, and on the left are placed the cow and bullock houses." This, written a century and a half ago,[4] exactly describes many of the farmyards of to-day, for example that shown in fig. 1, which has the dwelling house in the middle, the cowhouse, calf-house and a small store (formerly a dairy) on the left, with the manure heap behind them, while on the right are the stable, another store and the pigstye, with the haggard, where the hay and corn stacks are made, behind them. The fourth side is formed by a stone wall, with a gate; this wall fronts on the public roadway. This farmyard is at Duncormick, Co. Wexford, in the south east corner of Ireland, but similar examples may be found in almost every part of the east and south. Figure 2 shows the buildings on a larger farm, also in Co. Wexford. Here the entrance gate leads in between a cart shed on the right and the dairy on the left, with the pump close by. Facing the dwelling house across the yard are the stable and byre and a store, while the corn barn opens into the haggard. The pigsty and manure heap are in the part of the yard most distant from the dwelling house. The openings between the various buildings are closed by stone walls about

[Text continues on p. 12]

[1] Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926. Stationery Office, Dublin, 1930.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Freeman, T. W.: Ireland, Its Physical, Historical, Social and Economic Geography, 1950, chapters VIII and XVIII to XXIII.

[4] Rawson, T. J.: Statistical Survey of the County of Kildare, 1807, 14–15.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

II

Countrymen at Work

To bring you closer to the way of life we glimpsed through the window of old custom, I must try to clothe it in flesh and blood. It will not do to make the mistake of etherealizing it. Men everywhere face the same first necessities; they must live; they must feed, clothe and shelter themselves.

My subject, then, is the countryman at work. How does he make his livelihood in the Irish countryside? What is the work he does, and what are his incentives and rewards? Economic interpretations of history, sociology, anthropology are the fashion. What understanding can an economic inquiry yield us?

The first task in such an inquiry is to clear away the ground one is to examine. To look at the work of the countryman of rural Ireland demands dipping into the economics of the whole Free State. The countryman occupies an important place which must be recognized. It should not be discouraging that the task involves recourse to cold statistics. After all, the greatest array of numbers is a mere count of some sort of human activity; one can remember the living beings behind them.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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369 In the search for the countryman, one can break
241 through census records and production figures to find him pursuing his daily and annual round.

The task is simplified immensely by the fact that in 1926 the Free State Government undertook a complete census of the country. In the tables prepared there, the countrymen distinguish themselves
[162] in a variety of ways. They are the most numerous group in the country. Out of nearly three million inhabitants, one million eight hundred thousand, or 63 per cent, live in rural areas, outside cities and towns. Not all these country-dwellers are farmers,
241 of course, but the vast majority are. Fifty-one per cent of all occupied persons, male and female, in southern Ireland work at agriculture.

But these agriculturalists are not all alike, of course. Distinctions appear among them which are important to an understanding of the countryman. For example, the farms on which they work differ widely in size. Relative proportions of small and large farms vary with different parts of the country, but nevertheless small farms predominate in all Ireland. A farm over 200 acres is a rarity, comparatively speaking; most of them do not reach 100 acres. Thirty or fifty acres is the average size.

When one looks at the numbers of people these farms support, however, the small holdings come forward much more strongly. There are many more persons supported upon farms under thirty acres

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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than there are on farms over fifty. In fact, one could almost say 'the smaller the farm the greater number of persons it supports'. The plurality of Irish farmers support themselves upon farms averaging from fifteen to thirty acres in area. Almost eight of every ten persons working in agriculture live by small-farm production.

By our standards, a farm under thirty acres or even under fifty acres is very small. So it is regarded in Ireland. When I call the Irish countryman a small farmer, I am following standards the Irish use themselves. Yet, to deal with the life of the small farmers is to deal with that of the single largest group on the land.

Furthermore, that group is concentrated in the west and south of Ireland. Historical and economic currents have massed the population in the more rugged 'mountainy' regions of south and west. A county of the rich central plain, such as Meath, where large farms are most numerous, has a density of about fifty persons per square mile. But a poorer, mountainous county such as Mayo, where small farms are very numerous indeed, supports seventy-five persons per square mile or an almost 50 per cent greater density.

But do those who support themselves by small farms form a true category? Are they a group unto themselves, or are they a numeration meaningless for the student of human behaviour? Statistics have a way of revealing real categories in life, but they

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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241 also send one upon many false scents. One must use them with proper care. In such a case as this, care consists in discovering correlations and fitting them into wholes. For example, one learns little or nothing of various kinds of human beings if one counts only single characteristics. On the other hand, if one counts a wide variety of numerable features and finds one human group distinguishing itself again and again within this wide variety, one is justified in thinking one is dealing with a class of which the individuals are instances.

So it is with the economic data in the Irish records. The small farmers do appear as a true category. They reveal themselves in the cold figures as a class with habits of life of its own, different in kind and in quantitative expression from all others.

Rather than delay over the reasoning which leads to this conclusion, I should prefer to recite the distinguishing marks in the economic sphere.

231 241 434 437 First, it is clear that the small farmers practise a type of agriculture all their own. Their products differ widely from those of the large farmers, sometimes in kind, sometimes in proportion. The large farmer is a cattleman, a stockman. The small farmer is typically what we have come to call in this country 'a subsistence farmer'. Both depend primarily upon livestock, for Ireland is a country of grass and pasturage, depending less upon tillage than any other European land. But their economies

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are quite distinct. The small farmer cultivates a 231
'garden' of oats, rye, potatoes, cabbage and tur- 241
nips, and devotes his pasture and the hay of his 434
fields to milch cattle. He sells his cows' increase 437
each year. He keeps large numbers of hens and a few pigs. But the milch cow is the centre round which this economy revolves. Nearly all he raises he consumes at home; his family and his farm animals take the greater part of his produce. It is only his surplus and his annual crop of calves which break out of the circle of subsistence and in so doing bring him the only monetary income he receives.

In all this he differs considerably from the big farmer, particularly the so-called 'rancher' of Irish agriculture. The big farmer is primarily a producer of beef. He concentrates upon the production of fat cattle; he depends upon a monetary market in which to dispose of his fattened stock. Upon this market he relies for the supplies which feed himself and his labourers. If he is wealthier and much more of a man of business, he is also nearly entirely dependent upon the whims of price and demand.

Naturally, then, the small farmer and big farmer play quite distinct roles in the economics of exchange, distribution and commerce. The small farmer disposes of his cattle, usually calves of his own breeding, quite differently. He sells this surplus to the dealer, the middleman, the big farmer.

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231 As calves grow up they move from the small farm
241 to the large. It is the large farmer who grazes them
434 until they are ready for the English table. Con-
437 sequently, the local cattle fair is still the small farmer's mart, as it was in the middle ages. The big farmer, on the other hand, sells direct to shippers and exporters. In this system, which represents an immense cattle trade within Ireland, moving cattle endlessly from west to east, from small farms to ranches, and on to their final market in England, the big farmer acts, partly at least, as a commercial middleman or 'processer'. In many ways the 'economic war' with England, which the de Valera government is waging today in an effort to wean Ireland from its dependence upon an English market, is necessarily an attack upon the big farmer. . . .

With all this, it is natural that the small farmers
262 should be different consumers from the rest.
184 They live upon a different diet. They eat very little meat, confining themselves to bacon and occasional poultry. Eggs are a great staple and the potato has only slowly retreated from its place of honour, though the countryman makes sure he shall not allow it to betray him as it did in the time of the Famine. Milk, especially in the form of butter, is consumed more than in any European country. All this the small farmer raises at home. Bread and tea, English invaders of the last century, are now the commonest diet of all, and re-

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present the one staple which he must buy off the farm. This last he shares with the big farmer and the townsman, but otherwise he buys little of the meats and the shop products which fall to the lot of townsman and big farmer.

Neither type of farmer has much use yet for mechanized agriculture as we know it; for both are cattlemen. Nevertheless, the small farmer differs again in the tools he uses. He is the one who clings to hand tools; in poorer districts he must rely upon spade, flail, and scythe. The size of his farm and the poor quality of his land confine him to the manual tools.

Lastly, big farmers and small farmers work their lands quite differently. On the big farm, the farmer-owner uses hired labour. On the small farm, the owner relies upon the united efforts of his family. The countryman's subsistence farming is a family economy in which all members of the family take part—sons, daughters and other relatives. He differs completely in this regard from the large farmer, who is an employer and whose hands are wage earners.

This recitation of the distinguishing marks of peasant economics serves a purpose. It reveals in a roundabout manner what sort of livelihood it is that the countryman wrests from his land. He works a small farm with the help of his family. He raises a small garden of potatoes and a few other foodstuffs which feed both himself and his beasts,

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231 which beasts feed him in their turn. He need go
241 to town only for clothing and sundries, for flour
434 and tea, and to sell at the fairs the calves and yearlings which bring in his principal monetary income and provide thus for whatever he cannot produce at home. These cattle go to big farmers, ranchers and shippers; and with the sale his participation in trade and commerce, in 'business', is finished except for his account with the shopkeeper (and in late years, the creamery). As you can well imagine, it is a livelihood little connected with the outside world, and now that agrarian reform has made him full owner of his holding, it is little open to disturbance from the outside.

This is the external view of the small farm. It is the view that usually satisfies the economist. But if one probes deeper and looks at the small farmer's livelihood from within, a fuller picture appears.

241 That the small farmer is a family man even at
593 work is important for the study of human be-
[461] haviour. Eight out of ten people working in agriculture in Ireland work not for wages and salaries but by virtue of their family relationship. The work a man does and the directions he gives and receives take form within a social group. That fact yields an opportunity for the anthropologist. Here, in a modern country, is an economy in which there are other controls on labour than those we know—money, contracts, individual profit. To under-

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stand these controls is to reach at least one nucleus of the countryman's way of life.

In County Clare, as in all rural Ireland, the small farmer's family lives upon the holding it works. As a rule, the farmhouse is an isolated building standing upon its own ground and forming an integral part of the holding. This is the familiar type of farm we know; Meizen calls it the *Einzelhof*. There are many other types of settlement in Ireland: villages whose fields lie round about in somewhat the fashion of the Russian *mir*; striping fields; and the crazy-quilt pattern of 'rundale'; but the *Einzelhof* has won out historically. Anyway, whatever the type of holding, the farm family spends its entire life upon it: sleeping, eating, giving birth and dying there, and sallying forth every day for work. Whether or not there is a topographic identity between house and land, there is a social one. The countryside knows the farm as a unit. The farm shares the name of the family working it. It is inalienably associated with them.

Since cattle play so large a part in rural economy, it is natural that this unit should be known and judged as 'the place of so many cows'. For in Clare the land is valued for its pasture. It is divided into 'field' for grazing, and 'meadow' where the grass is cut for hay, and 'garden', the small tillage plot. In mountain areas, it may also include rough mountain grazing, called 'moun-

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462 of a Solomon Grundy. A farmer's wife of Clare
512 divided her week more rigidly in describing it than she did in practice. "On Monday", she said, "I do the washing, on Tuesday the ironing, on Thursday I make butter, on Friday to market, on Saturday I get ready for Sunday, and on Sunday I go to mass and do as little as I can." Really it is only on Sunday that any change seriously alters the daily round; for the country-people are strict sabbatarians, at least regarding work.

241 Work on the 'land' beyond the haggard and the
462 house is less restricted. It has a greater range over
221 the farm and offers a wider variety of tasks round the year. There is a wider freedom of choice among tasks as well. Soil and climate are just as insistent as is the household, but they do not force such narrow regularities.

Yet each season brings a task the farmer must perform. Custom and rivalry in the community restrict him as well. He is in fact less free to choose the date of sowing than his wife the hour of dinner. Long-established tradition and ancestral experience imprint upon his mind the best dates for planting, for reaping, for harrowing, for breeding cattle, and so forth. The farmer is caught, willingly of course, in a mesh of rivalries, competitions, condemnations, which binds him the more strongly to the community's patterning of his yearly round.

The seasonal rhythm of farm work reaches its low in winter. On bitter wet days little can be done

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beyond the haggard wall, as we have noted. All the many tasks of patching and repair are men's work, they fall to the farmer-father and his sons. The annual round is theirs, as the daily one belongs to the women.

For the countryman, the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to the Epiphany or 'Little Christmas', is the dead of winter. All farm work is at a standstill. The farmer is free to devote the season to holiday. Outside the weather is unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. For him the year has stopped and is waiting to renew its forces.

With the Epiphany, the succession of bitter wet days does not end, but holiday does. One's mind turns to the earnest work of the year to come. The farmer plans his spring planting. On drier days he can clean ditches and drains; he can lay in seed and repair machines. In the evenings, conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting and calving, and traditional experience goes from mouth to mouth. In fact, it is the time for all new plans, for it is Shrovetide, the season of match-making and marriage.

St. Bridget's Day, February 1, marks the beginning of spring. For St. Bridget promised every second day thereafter would be 'hard'. The return of the 'hard' days of wind and clear weather herald the land's drying-off. Through February and March, gardens must be prepared, potatoes planted,

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fields made ready for the return of the cattle to them. Each 'hard' day is more than welcome, for then work in the fields can go on. By St. Patrick's day, they say in Clare, the potatoes should all be 'down'; after that there still remains much to do, though the worst is over. St. Patrick promised that after his day *every* day would 'come hard'.

Through the rest of the spring, work is at its most intense. Potatoes must be 'stirred' and 'landed'; other root crops 'put down'. March and April see the birth of calves and the beginning of the season of greater milk yields and intensified butter-making. Before that in February and March the 'great spring fairs' take place, and the year's buying and selling of cattle must be done.

Then, gradually, with the return of warm weather and the drying-off of the land, Irish summer begins. May is often the first summer month. Soon the bogs are dry enough for cutting the year's supply of turf and for stacking it to dry under the summer warmth at the bog's edge.

Once the turf is cut and stacked, the first fruits of the farmer's labour begin to appear. The first crop is cabbage, which was planted at odd times very early. It is practically the only green of the diet and old people remember June or July *an chabdiste*, 'the hungry month', when a delayed potato crop might condemn them to a month or more of semi-starvation upon cabbage. Today new varieties of potatoes mature as early as June. But

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the mature potatoes mark no harvest; they are turned out of the ridges with spade and plough as they are needed.

The first true harvest, and the most important one of the year, is the haymaking. Mowing begins in late July or early August. The haymaking is a race against time and rainy weather. Every effort must be bent to mow, rake, dry and stack the grasses, first in small haycocks, then in the great hayrick in the haggard, before rain brings rot to the lush crop. The farmers speak of it aptly when they call it 'saving the hay'.

Corn crops, oats and rye, come in next, and then through September, October and November the other roots, mangels and turnips, must be 'pulled'. Turf must be brought down to the haggard from the bog-ricks; and everything made ready for man and cattle for the coming winter. Autumn fairs bring a new high in buying and selling cattle; and with the last of them, winter sets in again and Advent has returned. In late November the farmer may turn over his gardens with the plough, to prepare them for the spring. As he follows the furrow, he can look back upon a year ended and forward upon a new one to begin.

Yet, unvarying as this yearly round is, and much as the recurrent patterns of work in garden, meadow and field follow the farmer year after year, from boyhood to death, this work—man's round—is freer and more various, even perhaps

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more arduous, than woman's. We must remember this difference. It reflects an important dichotomy between the sexes in the organization of labour.

We can see this dichotomy even when the group works as a unit. At various crucial points in the annual round we have just followed, the whole family bends to the tasks at hand together. At potato planting, turf-cutting and haymaking, one can see them working in unison. Even the young children contribute their share to the common rhythm of the task. Yet the woman's role is separate. It is auxiliary; the simpler, less arduous tasks fall to her. The heavier work and command of the enterprise rests with the men. The plough, the harrow, the mower, the scythe, the spade and the turf-cutting *slán* are regarded as masculine implements. The attitudes of the countryside forbid a woman's using them. In the same way, they heap ridicule upon the thought of a man's interesting himself in the feminine sphere, in poultry, or in the churning.

Immemorial folklore bolsters this division. The woman is unlucky to masculine enterprises, for instance: it is dangerous to see a woman on the road to the fair. Likewise, man is dangerous to the woman's work. If he so much as takes his lighted pipe out of the house while she is churning, he may 'take the butter', through fairy magic.

In this dichotomy, of course, the male sphere bears higher value. But dichotomy implies no de-

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132 winters—all these characteristics are related to the eastward moving stream of cyclones coming off the warm North Atlantic drift. Rain is heaviest wherever mountain masses place obstacles in the path of the moisture-bearing winds, and the peninsulas of Donegal, Connemara and Kerry have from 60 to 100 inches of rain each year (Fig. 8). By contrast the east coast gets about half this amount, while the low-lying tract between Dublin and Drogheda is favoured by a fall of under 30 ins. Everywhere the mildness and the damp encourage grasses and moisture-loving plants, but too often waterlogging has caused green pastures and woodlands to deteriorate into brown bogland. The prolonged autumns, another gift of the Atlantic, are important because they give man a sporting chance of saving his harvests: the heaviest rains are delayed until November and December. Similarly the relatively dry springs (March-May) are conducive to work in field and turf-bog at that season. (Chapter 15).

311 231 241 Reviewing the distribution of the chief crops and animals to-day, the following facts may be noted. Nearly one half the land devoted to crops, excluding hay, is occupied by oats and perhaps three-quarters of the yield is fed to livestock. Only in the wettest peninsulas of Connemara and Kerry does another crop (potatoes) occupy more land. It is estimated that the "consumption" of potatoes amounts to about ½ ton per head of the population each year, but the greater part of this goes to pigs and other livestock. The greatest concentration of wheat production is in the comparatively sunny corner of Wexford, with secondary areas along the dry east coast in Cos. Dublin and Down. Recent years have witnessed an increase in wheat growing but there is still far less than in the record years of a century ago. when wheat was being exported to England. Barley, which is more intolerant of damp than wheat, is found on the well-drained soils of Co. Louth but particularly of Wexford and the sheltered valleys of the Nore, Suir and Barrow. It has declined less than wheat because of the demand of the breweries and distilleries, but the drop in the illicit making of poteen has reduced its production in many a secluded spot along the west coast.

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CHAPTER X.

SEEDTIME.

Except in a few districts where winter wheat is grown the farmer's year may be said to begin in spring when, from February on, the land is ploughed or dug for the new crops. Several arguments are advanced against autumn ploughing—that the land is too wet and that the winter destroys the seed-bed—but as with many other things the preference is best explained by deep-rooted custom. So long as the land was held in rundale autumn ploughing was out of the question since the stock had the run of the whole townland after Hallowe'en.

We have very little information about old Irish ploughs. Owing to the fact that they were made almost entirely of wood archæology cannot help us much, but shaped stones that may have been shares and coulters have been found, and plough-irons do sometimes turn up. The discovery by Dr. O'Neill Hencken of a large iron coulter in the Ballinderry crannog shows that a heavy plough necessitating a big team had reached Co. Westmeath by the 10th century A.D. Pipe-rolls of the 13th century refer to plough teams of 8 oxen in Co. Meath: this was the normal complement under the English three-field system. At the other end of the scale, as it were, there survived into living memory along the west coast the custom of attaching the horse to the plough or harrows by the tail, and although the practice was severely condemned it had the advantage that the horse would stop if the plough

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struck a rock, thus saving the share, the traces and the ploughman from injury. The tying of the tail-hair to the traces, which were commonly of sugán or fir rope, required a difficult knot known in later days to very few. This undoubtedly ancient practice seems to have been linked with other customs such as walking backwards before the plough horses, burning the corn in the straw, and plucking or clipping wool from the sheep whenever it was required. It appears that we have in this group of survivals an older culture-laver overlaid by newer methods some of which are themselves of high antiquity. There is some evidence that the original simpler wooden plough mentioned below, together with the clod-breaker and the winnowing tray (Chapter 14) belong to the older layer, whereas the improved wooden plough, the harrow and the flail are later arrivals.

English visitors of the 18th century and the writers of the Statistical Accounts published by the Royal Dublin Society have given many particulars of the varying practices of a century and a half ago. From them we select a few observations. The method of ploughing in Co. Clare was to use four horses abreast, the driver walking backwards between the two middle horses. This is also described as "the old method" in Co. Roscommon. Four oxen were employed in Co. Dublin and Co. Tipperary, "never less than four oxen or four horses" in Kilkenny, six in Meath, three in Fermanagh and two in King's County. The large teams of some regions may imply that co-aration had at one time been practised. The four horses of the north Antrim plough-team were contributed or "pooled" by four farmers under the system of "morrowing" or "neighbour dealing" which finds ready parallels in Scotland. In Co. Clare this pooling custom is known as "cooring," and in other parts as "milling." The Irish farm horse, it should be remembered, is a small light breed: except near large towns heavy cart horses are rarely seen.

Nevertheless in the more backward parts the two horse plough seems to have been general, as it is to-day, and it has been supposed that the two-ox plough was standard in early

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Celtic times. I have never seen the wooden plough in use, but I have attempted to reconstruct a drawing (Fig. 43) with the help of discarded specimens and descriptions given by men who have worked with them, and I find that my sketch closely resembles an example in the National Museum of Ireland which I have since examined. It consists of a short " head " fitted with an iron share or sock attached by means of folded flanges like the turf spade or the loy, and also shod with an iron sole-shoe. Into the head is morticed the main handle, in such a way that its left side forms a straight line with the head and with the straight side of the sock. To the main handle are fastened both the " wee handle " and the long " beam " which in turn is keyed to the head and carries the coulter. Finally a block of wood known as the rest is secured to the right side of the head and has above it a nine-inch mould board. The plough horses had no bits or reins, and the outfit needed two men, one to hold and one to drive. It was often necessary for a third hand to walk alongside " with a strong stick bearing on the beam to keep the plough in the ground."

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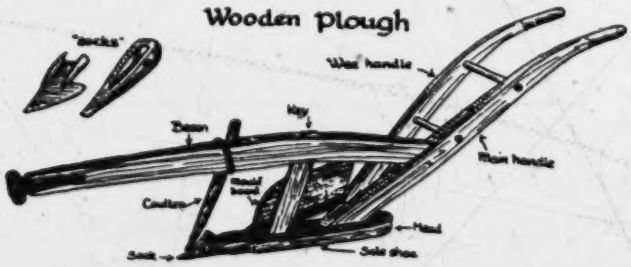

Fig. 43.

The wooden plough was lighter than the all-iron plough, and was considered to break the earth better than the smooth share and curved breast of the swing plough which took its place, but it did not effectively turn the sods: the so-called mould-board did little more than prevent some of the soil from falling back into the furrow. Yet this is the " new wooden plough " which in Donegal replaced only a century

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241 407 ago a still simpler plough described as a " crooked stick armed with a bit of iron," which must have been in no way different, apart from " the bit of iron," from the plough of the Bronze Age. In fact there were wide areas where a plough of any [412] kind was practically unknown, and it must be admitted that in the small stoney fields of the west the spade is much more serviceable. It is still the only implement used on hundreds of small farms, and at best the spade had to supplement the old types of plough around the headlands and among the stones and rocks. Moreover the wooden plough left the ground so uneven that lumps had to be broken with a maul or " mell " (Fig. 44) and holes filled in with the spade to prevent the seed being " lost." This process was known in Co. Antrim as " mannering." Cross-ploughing seems to be an old Irish custom and helps to explain why the field system is rectangular in contrast to the long strips of ploughland associated with the heavy English wheeled plough.

Fig. 44.

In preparing ground whether for corn or potatoes the practice was to plough the land in narrow ridges varying in width from about 4 to 12 sods (say 3½ to 10 feet) according to the depth and nature of the soil. The furrow or " sheugh " between the ridges would be some two feet wide. This was scraped with the plough but not turned, and it provided the earth for shovelling on the ridges after the seed had been sown. " An old ridge in the ground," runs an Irish saying, " outlives three yews " ; and indeed ancient cultivation ridges can be seen at all but the highest levels and have been observed underneath bogs when they are cut away. The plough ridges

Fig. 45.

Old cultivation ridges and remains of rath, Scrabo, Co. Down.

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are nowadays much wider: the narrow ridges and deep furrows are quite unsuited to the use of machinery (Fig. 45). 241

February, March and April are the busy ploughing months. Corn was generally sown directly "on the furrow," but the seed-bed often required careful preparation either by breaking the clods and dragging along a strong thorn bush weighted with stones or by harrowing. The time is remembered when the old "six bull" wooden harrow was fitted with wooden tines or cows' horns, arranged in consecutive order and not "staggered." These were frequently dragged by the horse's tail. Oats were sown with a one-hand cast from a linen sheet hung round the neck. This is the method still employed on small farms, although the practice of covering the seed with the shovel is almost abandoned. An alternative method, which is perhaps of fairly recent introduction, is to sow with the "fiddle and bow"—the silent fiddler making a striking picture as he strides firmly up and down the field. The seed drill, it goes without saying, is gradually replacing hand sowing. but the older generation is convinced that much better crops resulted from burying the seed, and it is claimed that the land was better drained by the deep furrows between the ridges.

Potatoes are still planted in the old ridge-and-furrow way on small farms. We need not describe the drill method which 244 is universally adopted on larger farms, except to notice that different methods and many types of simple implements are used to prepare and level the drills. My colleague, Mr. O. Davies, tells me that a common practice in Co. Wexford is to break the lumps in the drills with a "drag," a heavy block of granite on which the farmer stands as he drives the horse along the drill. When old grassland is broken up for potatoes, set-rigs or "lazy-beds" are made with the spade (Fig. 46), as in the Scottish Highlands. In the north the push plough or "flachter" (Chapter 15 and Figs. 83-85) was formerly used for this purpose.

The finished lazy-bed closely resembles the ploughed potato ridge, but it is all spade-work and gets its name from the fact that the sod under the ridge is not dug. The width of

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digging or shovelling. For these processes the digging fork and long-handled shovel are the proper tools. (Fig. 65). It should also be remarked that the preparation of lazy-beds was communal team-work, undertaken by groups of from 8 to 16 men who shared their labour under the system of voluntary co-operation which distinguished the village community. The custom is maintained in a few localities.

The loy served in certain districts as a dibber for setting the potatoes "against the back of the spade." but various special dibbers were also used. There was, for instance, the large two-handed "steeveen" found from Co. Leitrim to Co. Clare. As another example of a dibber we illustrate the clumsy-looking "stamp" from Co. Armagh (Fig. 47), employed in sowing turnips. Reference will be made elsewhere (Chapter 16) to the use of seaweed as manure. Old thatch, with its content of soot from the turf fire, is occasionally used as a fertilizer, and I am told that in Achill Island miniature stone, sod or turf buildings used as "soot houses" are roofed with rafters and scraws each autumn. Fires are lit in them, the smoke depositing soot on its passage through the thatch. This is then stripped off and, with the ashes of the fires, spread on the land as manure in spring. The thatch of the Hebridean black houses was utilized in the same way.

Fig. 47.

A practice which was formerly widespread and attracted a great deal of heated discussion in the period of agricultural development at the end of the 18th century was the preparing of waste ground for cultivation by "paring and burning," or "denshiring." It seems probable that this was a survival of ancient custom, and I believe that old-fashioned tool, the flachter, was probably employed for the purpose, just as its sister-tool, the breast-plough, was in England. Many types of tools were perfected for land reclamation, including a special skinning-plough. In the south-west a heavy hoe or mattock, known as a graffan—similar to the implement still used in Kerry for breaking clods on potato ridges—was popular as a paring tool, the sod being rolled with the foot as it was cut. By such laborious processes, and by centuries of

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241 412 toil and grazing, by plough and spade, hoof and muzzle, have Ireland's green fields been " moulded."

Fig. 48.
Clips

Although we cannot touch on the other crops and have given a very inadequate idea of the bustle, worries and humours of the Irish springtime, when all the crops demand to be put in the ground at the same time, we must end this chapter with a few comments on the growing season. The [516] general practice when thinning root crops is to work on the knees with the hands: one rarely sees a hoe being used for thinning. Yet paradoxically corn is weeded, if it gets any attention at all, with a pair of wooden pincers or thistle-pullers, called, in Co. Antrim, " clips " (Fig. 48). This tool is already [184] mentioned in a Tour of Ireland in 1752. The weeders are not so common in the south of the country and are fitted with iron pincers in some counties. Another home-made device once familiar in the north was the crow-scarer or " corn-crake," a noisy instrument made on the principle of the watchman's rattle or—to give a modern instance—the gas rattle of the A.R.P. services.

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CHAPTER XI.

HARVEST.

In this chapter we shall give an account of some harvesting customs which depend on a minimum of mechanical appliances. We begin with the hay harvest, the first of the season. The new agriculture represented by turnips and rotation grasses has, in its diffusion from England during the last two centuries, still barely touched the remoter parts of Ireland, where hay until lately had no place in the scheme of cultivation. Successive crops of corn and potatoes were taken so long as the land would yield anything, when it was allowed to grow wild grasses and weeds until the time came to break it up once more. Oat straw, which is never chaffed, to some extent took the place of hay, which, apart from a limited amount of meadow hay and "sprit," was chiefly gathered from waste places and mearings and reserved for horses and milk cows. It should be noticed that the old customs of herding, tethering and spancelling permitted the stock to graze in places where hay could not be made. Moreover natural hay, ripened but left uncut, was utilized to a great extent along the mild coasts.

Scandinavian archæologists have shown that the practice of preserving grass as hay for winter use began in that region during the cold wet phase of climate known as the Sub-Atlantic (Chapter 4). So it may have been in Ireland, too: the scythe and the iron hook have their origin in the Early Iron Age, and some of the methods of securing the crop can have changed little in two thousand years. On small farms

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243 survivals, associated with the cutting of the last sheaf—the "churn" or the "Cailleach" (Chapter 19).

Corn stacks are more varied in shape than haystacks and need better protection from weather and from vermin. [824] Sprigs of apple-mint (*M. arvensis*) may be thrown through the sheaves to keep away mice. The stone stack-stands or staddels, called "hovels," are a picturesque feature of the stackyard in some districts. With their steep tops rising above the house clusters, the golden corn stacks turn the little Irish villages into African kraals, or in the fields one may count as many as 30 round stacks in a row, rising against the sky up the hillside. Then the whole countryside seems fuller than usual. New colours and odours meet one on all sides, and the horses as they pass give off the sharp smell which comes from crunching the fresh oats. The country smiths used to make a small light fork or "pike," fitted with a long handle, for throwing the last sheaves high up (Fig. 66). The stacks are thatched with rushes, twisted into bundles known as "stapples" which are pushed into the straw.

[285]
[415]

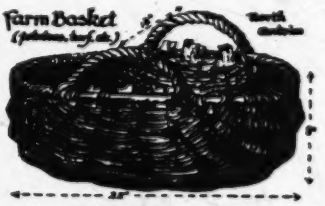

Fig. 54.

241 We cannot touch on the methods of harvesting and stacking the other cereal crops, wheat, barley and rye, but a word must be said in conclusion on the last harvest of the year—the root crops. Although turnips and the new sugar beet are important in some areas, it is the potato crop which means most to the peasant. All available hands are in the fields, gathering the precious food-supply into wicker baskets or boxes (Figs. 54 and 55); and the school children are given

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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special holidays. The potatoes are sorted, the small and faulty roots being put aside for the stock and poultry. The crop is then " pitted," that is piled in long heaps in the field and covered with straw and earth. October is the potato month, and under the old system the limiting date was Hallowe'en, for after that the animals were allowed to roam freely over the village or townland. It should be noticed that early potatoes are little esteemed in Ireland apart from commercial cultivation in a few coastal districts. A curious example of specialized potato-growing is cited in Chapter 16.

241 ●

[415]

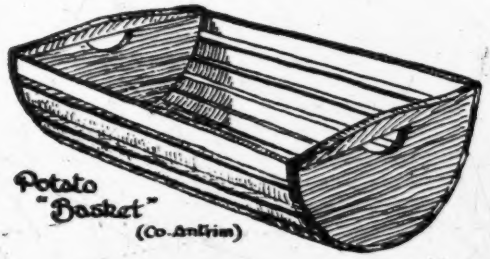

Fig. 55. (22" by 16")

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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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American Indians is the buzz, a rectangular piece of wood or a circular disc of metal which is rotated on a twisted string, by drawing the hands apart, to produce a buzzing sound. It is recorded that the young weavers of 19th century Belfast were fond of playing with the "bummer," and I saw the toy, called a "snorer," in use in north-east Antrim this summer.

Many examples could be given of children's games and rhymes which retain memories of ancient rites. Thus it has been suggested that the game known as "Draw a pail of water" is "the attenuated survival of the religious rite of water worship." Similarly there are hints of foundation sacrifice in "the Devil's Bridge," of marriage by capture in "Nuts in May," of marriage by purchase in "Lords from Spain" and of funeral rites in "Jeannie Jo" and "Green Gravel." These games are not necessarily long established in Ireland—some of them were probably introduced by planters, as in the Appalachian region of the U.S.A.—but they are of wide occurrence and considerable age in other parts of Europe. It is worth putting on record that the aid of magic is still sought in causing illness by making and injuring a wax model of someone to whom ill is wished. It is not five years since a case which resulted in death occurred within a short distance of Belfast. I have no doubt that instances of curious love charms, of raising a wind and so on could still be found, though the old method of burying a black hen alive to bring a fair wind is probably forgotten. The so-called "protective formulæ" such as "God bless the work" and "I wish you luck of the baste" are common currency.

Harvest customs that deserve mention are the cutting of the last sheaf and the wearing of harvest knots. In the north of Ireland, as in many other parts of Europe, it was customary, so long as sickles were the reaping tools—the practice became modified with the use of scythes—for the harvesters to fling their hooks at the last plaited remnant of standing corn. This was known under various names such as neck, churn, hare, granny, carline and cailleach or "collya."

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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A good deal of skill was required and "the contestants were hindered by the unkind jokes of their friends. When the cailleach was eventually "stretched" or "cut and dead," she was "waked," carried into the house or barn, and generally kept until the following year." To quote Mr. Paterson once more, "Sometimes a party followed the ceremony, at which it was usual for the boys and girls to wear harvest knots." I illustrate two examples of knots, one with the ears left on, which is done in three plait, and the other the more common two-straw pattern (Fig. 114). It has been claimed that the

Fig. 114.

latter form is a late introduction from England, but it is known that the first type was worn by girls, in their hair, and the second by boys. They were often made before the actual cutting of the corn and are not necessarily associated with the ceremony of the last sheaf. Mr. Paterson tells me that in Armagh they used to be exchanged between the sexes as a token of admiration or love.

Finally we must not forget the countless superstitious beliefs connected with birds and trees, with water beasts, and

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

on this subject, I shall not attempt the treatment of it myself, but shall quote the opinion of the Rev. Eugene O'Growney, who has an exceptional knowledge of both people and language, and has kindly furnished me with some of his notes relating to them. He says:— "The Irish spoken in Boffin has a very poor vocabulary, as far as I heard it spoken. I must say, however, that it was not easy to get the people to speak it, and many children at first refused point blank to utter a word of Irish. In most of the Irish-speaking districts of the west, the people have preserved a number of old poetic prayers and hymns. Many of these are very beautiful, and some appear to be of great age. I was particularly interested at the time of my visit in these hymns, but was told that the only hymn in use in Boffin and Shark was the *ortha Mhuire*, or prayer of Mary. I could not find any person in Boffin who could recite it, and the only person in Shark who was supposed to have it in full was out at sea. An old man in Boffin recited for me a portion of a quaint old religious composition in English." In another place he states that the people speak neither English nor Irish well, their dialect of the language containing many corrupted English words, and at least one curious word. "I recollect that the cove in which St. Leo's well is situated is called *fuath Leo*. I take the word *fuath*, which is the usual word in Inishshark and Inisboffin for a 'cove,' to be a corruption of *uamh*, which is used by the Four Masters in the year 893 as meaning 'cave.'"[1]

IV. Sociology.

1. *Occupations.*—Every family combines fishing and farming, and has some share in a boat. The farms are small (see p. 340), about three acres and a-half under potatoes and oats, being about the average amount of tillage per family. All are held direct from the landlord, who resides on Inishbofin, there being no subletting or con-acre. The rents average about £2 per holding, but vary much according to the extent and quality of the land.

The holdings are not divided up into small fields, as in Aran, but are often insufficiently fenced, allowing the cattle to stray, which

[1] The Rev. E. A. Lavelle has, since the above was written, sent a translation of a curious old Irish litany used on both islands, both in Irish and English, which he obtained from an old man, aged 84, whose father, Peter Lavelle, fought under Nelson at Trafalgar. As the litany is in English and of great length, it is not inserted here, but it is to be hoped that the Irish form will be recorded and preserved as it may possess the linguistic value wanting in a translation.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

241 sometimes raises cases of trespass. The fences are the usual dry stone
[423] walls of the west, and the fields seldom have gates.

[417] The crops most grown are barley, oats, potatoes, and a little rye, and a few turnips. The manures are sea-weed and farm-yard manure, and occasionally old thatch, saturated with peat smoke, and well rotted with age. The agricultural implements employed are the spade and shovel, and the sickle; the use of plough or harrow is not known. Low-lying, damp places are utilized for the growth of osiers for panniers, baskets, and lobster-pots.

As is the case in many fishing communities, the fields are not well kept, and have a rather untended appearance, the weeds being let grow rankly in the potato fields, the reason given for which is that without the shelter given by the weeds the crop would be speedily destroyed by the winds; but the most probable explanation is that the amount of attention directed towards the fishing at the most critical periods of the year causes the less important occupation to be to some extent neglected. A family keeps a couple of pigs, some
[231] sheep, a cow or two, geese (of which large flocks are kept on the islands), ducks and fowl, but no turkeys.

735 Some sixty families are said to be in very poor circumstances, and of these forty-six have no cattle.

231 The animals are to a large extent supported on the very extensive commonage.

The pigs, cattle, and fowl are taken into the houses at night, while the sheep, geese, and ponies get shelter how they can. The pigs are not regularly fed, but have, as the people express it, "the run of their teeth" of the island, and by feeding on such provision as they can pick up on the sea-shore, the flesh is often rendered rank and fishy-flavoured.

372 Fuel is supplied either by peat cut from the bogs, or, in a large proportion of cases, by "scraws" of the thin peaty layer which covers the rocky surface of the higher and wilder parts of the islands, cut into blocks the size of peats, and dried in the sun. The substance thus obtained can be burned, and will throw out considerable heat, but is extremely dirty and wasteful, as it contains a large proportion of earth and small pebbles, which are left in the ash. From repeated cuttings of these "scraws" the surface of the higher ground has become much deteriorated in value, and this is especially the case on
[237] Inishshark, where there are no bogs. In times of scarcity fish-bones and cow-mats (*bois de râche*) are used as fuel.

373 For light, petroleum lamps and candles are now generally used,

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

homespun, buttoned up the back, and reaching well below the knees, until they reach the age of ten or eleven years. The dyes for the homespuns are obtained from plants growing on the islands; the orange used for stockings being got from a lichen (*Ramalina scopulorum*); black and brown from the purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*); blue from a small cruciferous plant; and red usually from imported madder, but sometimes from water-lily roots. Alum is used as mordant.

5. *Dwellings.*—A house consists of a kitchen, and one or two bed-rooms; and it is, as a rule, built of dry stones without any mortar, though this is used afterwards for stopping chinks, and plastering the walls internally. Most of the houses are not whitewashed, with the exception of a belt around the small windows, but lime-washed houses are becoming more common than formerly. The house has two doors, front and back, both opening directly into the kitchen: and the windows are situated only on the front of the house; they are of very small size, and seldom made to open; yet, often, small as they are, they are nearly filled up, so as to leave only from six inches to a foot square of glazed surface. The chimneys and fireplaces are of the usual type found throughout the rural districts of Ireland, except that in some cases the chimney, after rising perpendicularly nearly to the top of the wall, turns outwards and opens as a square hole in the gable. The roof is straw thatch, laid on over "scraws" of grass turf, and held down by a net-work of sougans (straw ropes), to the ends of which heavy stones or long pieces of timber are attached. The gable of the house is stepped, so that the thatch when laid on does not project over the end wall, and is sealed down, to prevent water getting under it at this part, by a plastering of clay.[1] The thatch is put on fresh every year, a new layer being laid over the older ones, until the lowermost layer is thoroughly saturated with smoke, and quite rotten, when the whole is stripped off and used as manure. The floor is of beaten clay in the kitchen, but the bedrooms are sometimes boarded. The most expensive material used in building a house is wood, which is very scarce, and is usually obtained from drift wood, washed up after a storm, in which way large beams often reach the islands. It is owing to this scarcity of material, and the people having to build their own houses, that there are so few outbuildings or cattle-sheds, and that the dwelling-houses are so small. The furniture is scanty, and testifies to the poverty of the people. A few

[1] "Houses thatched in this manner are called on the west coast *tighthe cruithte*, i. e. 'shaken houses,' in contrast to the *tighthe fuaighte* 'stitched houses,' in which the thatch is tied on by ropes or cords."—REV. E. O'GROWNEY.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

Ireland. Barrett, Burke, Carey, Joyce, M'Andrew, Walsh, and probably Williams (if it be, as is alleged, a form of Mac William or Mac Quillin). 551

(c.) The immigrants from Ulster come next, amongst whose descendants are said to be the O'Donnells, Connells, Doghertys, Gallaghers, Geraghtys, Reillys (from Cavan), and perhaps M'Loughlins.

(d.) The Mac Cormicks came into the district in the reign of James I.

(e.) Last come names of English origin, the most ancient of which seems to be Bingham, dating from the reign of Elizabeth. Tollet, and probably Dixon, are names of descendants of the Shane settlers. The other English names are of shorter standing, and some of them may really be anglicised local surnames.

The names of the English settlers signed to the petition to Sir Henry Bingham, sometime in the reign of Queen Anne, are Higginbotham, Maxwell, Dennistoun, Linney, Langford, Tollett, Houston, Parker, Gamble, Calwell, and Low; of these, Tollett is the only one now found in the parish, if Gammell be not a corrupted form of Gamble.[1]

IV.—Sociology.

1. *Occupations.*—Excluding the inhabitants of the little town of Belmullet, in which most of the tradesmen reside, the people are, as a rule, either fishermen or farmers, or they combine both occupations. There are a few large holders and proprietors, but the majority of the farms are of small size. These holdings are but poorly fenced, a frequent cause of dispute. Fences are usually earthen or turf, but on the islands dry stone walls, such as are seen in Aran, are common. The principal crops are barley, oats, rye, and potatoes. All the farming is rude and primitive. Spade labour is practically universal, the spades being of modern form, as the old "gowel"[2] or "gowel-gob," a two-bladed or forked wooden spade formerly used here, has long been extinct. 463 241 [351] [412]

In 1834 there were only 3 ploughs and the same number of carts in use in the Mullet: now (1895) the number of ploughs is 30, and of carts 63. [407] [493]

[1] Though these settlers are spoken of as English by the various writers who have mentioned the colony, yet the majority of these surnames appear to be Scotch.

[2] A specimen of this curious agricultural implement is figured in the Catalogue of Antiquities of the Royal Irish Academy.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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241 The manures used are mainly sea-weed and farmyard manure. In the mountains the practice of burning the land is common.

The pasture is fairly good, but the cattle and sheep are inferior,
231 though efforts are now being made to improve the breeds.

An average family has a couple of pigs, a cow or two and some sheep, a large number of fowl, geese and ducks, and a donkey or horse.

372 The fuel used is turf obtained from the bogs, which are extensive, except in the southern part of the Mullet; and the islands which have now no turf of their own import from Achill or Ballycroy.

A very considerable quantity of kelp is made, on which, in the
381 Mullet, a royalty is charged by the landlord. About Portacloy there is no royalty paid.

Fishing employs many of the men, though until lately the fish
226 taken was merely for home use. The kinds usually caught are turbot, mackerel, ling, cod, and herrings; all of these, except the turbot, are now cured at the fishing stations established at several parts of the coast by the government. For home consumption, much
[251] is eaten fresh, but a good deal of it is roughly salted for winter use.

Lobsters are mostly taken by the men of Inishkea, and by a couple of boats at Portacloy. The Inishkea men, while at this
[342] fishing, mostly live in very primitive huts on Inisglora, where they stay away from their families for six weeks or two months at a time.
[435] The lobsters are sold in Belmullet for about five shillings per dozen, and are sent by car to Ballina and thence to England. The lobster pots are mostly of home manufacture.

The fishery stations mentioned above now afford employment to many who formerly had no means of disposing of their surplus time and fish.

439 Large quantities of eggs are exported from this district, Belmullet
235 being the largest egg exporting centre in Ireland. They are brought into the town by the country people and sold to dealers, who, when they have collected a sufficient quantity, send them on to Ballina, whence they are sent to England. Butter is also exported in the
[234] summer and autumn.

273 Illicit distilling is carried on to some extent in this district, though not at all so prevalent as formerly. The stills are made in the people's homes by travelling tinkers who live with the family until the job is finished.

286 A good deal of homespun is made, but the dyes are not obtained

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
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241 231 A cruel custom is said to have been common in the district at one time, which was still in use in 1835, of harrowing with the harrow fastened to the horses tail.

513 The females of a family sleep in the "room," the men in the bed in the kitchen; if the family be large, the beds will be very full, the occupants lying "heads and points," as several of my informants phrased it, that is, some with their heads in the ordinary place, others with theirs to the foot of the bed. No night-clothing is worn by either sex among the poorer people.

A method of sleeping when the house was much crowded was formerly practised in this district, which is fully described by a writer[1] who has been frequently quoted in this Report:—"This is what is called sleeping in *stradoge*, and *is regulated* as follows:—The floor is thickly strewed with fresh rushes, and stripping themselves entirely, the whole family lie down at once and together, covering themselves with blankets if they have them, if not, with their day-clothing, but they lie down *decently*, and in order; the eldest daughter next the wall farthest from the door, then all the sisters according to their ages; next the mother, father, and sons in succession, and then the [834] strangers, whether the travelling pedlar, or tailor, or beggar; thus the strangers are kept aloof from the female part of the family, and if there be apparent community, there is great propriety of conduct."

262 3. *Food.*—The dietary varies somewhat with the locality, but fish seems to form a considerable part of it in all but the mountainous portions of the district. Flesh or fowl are rarely tasted, except at Christmas time, or at Michaelmas, or some other great occasion. The islanders are said to make some use of sea birds, but use fish as the staple animal food. This is eaten fresh in summer, and coarsely salted for winter use.

The main articles of diet are stirabout, soda-bread, and boxty (a form of damper made of grated raw potatoes, and cooked on a griddle. This extremely indigestible form of bread is much used in the mountainous parts), potatoes, and tea, which is becoming more [272] extensively used than formerly, and is now taken at nearly every meal. Whatever the other meals may be composed of, fish forms part of supper.

An average day's dietary in the Mullet would be somewhat as follows:—

262 264 *Breakfast.*—Potatoes and fish, or Indian meal (sometimes oatmeal) stirabout, buttermilk.

[1] C. O., "Sketches in Erris and Tyrawley," p. 34.

342 been built for almost the entire popula-
511 tion. In 1893 it was said that there
[657] were no outbuildings or cattle-sheds, so that peat was stacked in a corner of the cottage with the fowls roosting on it, the pigs in a pen beside the fireplace, the cattle in a pen at the other end of the room, and the farm implements and
[343] fishing tackle in the rafters.[11] Now the old houses are the outbuildings, still thatched, with oat straw (not rye as formerly) laid on sods and tied down with home-made straw ropes weighted with large stones. Only five thatched houses were still inhabited in 1954. Some of the thatch has sprouting oats and some of it is rotten, but, when a roof is beyond further repair, it is all stripped off and the sodding and thatching begins again. Happily, corrugated iron is not used as it cannot stand the weather.

Farming

● 241 Agricultural practice is almost uniform: an acre or so is divided between oats, potatoes, and—in a few cases—barley, and there is generally a small patch of turnips, mangolds, and, less frequently, cabbage (Fig. 2). Onions, carrots, and parsnips were rarely seen. The ground used for crops is called the "garden," and its fertility is maintained by using animal manure and seaweed, and also by rotating the crops. Strange (or "foreign") seed is favored, and
[657] bought at a cheap rate under a government scheme. The remainder of the farmstead consists of a varying amount of meadow, generally 1–3 acres, and some pasture. The precious crops are
[231] carefully walled, but some of the farmers open their fields to the cattle and sheep after the harvest, partly as a means of natural fertilizing.

231 Each farmer has one or two cows and
439

[11] C. R. Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

[p. 206(A)]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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the rural community. It is convenient for the farmer to live among his fields near his stock—to look after the calving cow—and for the farmer's wife to keep a close watch on her poultry. (Not long ago, as we shall see, it was quite common for the cows to share the kitchen, and the cow-byre and dwelling house are still often under the same roof.) But for jobs requiring traction-implements or expensive tools the help of neighbours is necessary. The small family-farm can support only one horse, and thus there is a good deal of co-operation, perforce, among neighbours in tilling the ground, in harvest work and other operations. Both seed-time and harvest are, in the Irish climate, seasons of heavy pressure, when the work must be got through speedily, and nothing is so conducive to speed as a 'gathering' of neighbours among whom a spirit of rivalry acts as a spur. These relics of former communal habits are becoming less frequent with mechanization, but in many districts not less than a quarter of the small farmers possess only one horse, so that 'joining' or 'cooring' to make up a two-horse team is usual. In all such cases no money payments are made. A fairly common practice, however, is for the small farmer to buy a second horse at the February fairs and sell it in May after the spring work is finished.

In this and other ways the isolated houses are bound by ties of neighbourhood and friendship so that one may think of them as forming close-knit communities lacking only the physical nucleation of former times. The improving planners, eager to confer urban amenities on the countryside, would have 'housing schemes' and planned villages in place of scattered houses, but nothing could be less suitable under existing conditions. Physical independence is the price paid for good neighbourliness. The old clachans, necessary so long as the infield-outfield or rundale method of land-use was practised, became a hopeless anachronism when new tools and new crops brought with them a rotational system and hedged fields.

We have little knowledge of the nature of rural settlement in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland, but since partnership farming, presumably with clachans and rundale, is well attested in ancient Ireland and is known to have been widespread in the eighteenth century it is safe to suppose that there was a

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evidence that periodic re-allotment had been a general practice. It continued well into last century in some parts of the country, for example Antrim, Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Galway and Kilkenny. The casting of lots, annually[1] or triennially[2] was the occasion for much display of feeling, and was regulated by a headman or 'king' who also made arrangements for the summer pasturing.[3] In Kilkenny[4] the lots were cast by means of marked stones wrapped in clay. The ritual was prolonged. 'They sometimes play at it to try their luck before they will cast lots in good earnest. Even then they must sometimes make a new division if too many are dissatisfied.'[5]

To understand the openfield system in full working order we should see it in its total geographical setting, the booley with the bally. Here in the hilly fringes of Europe, towards the ocean, even moderately fertile land is limited in extent: soils derived from barren rocks and heavily leached by excessive rains are subject to waterlogging, acidity and the accumulation of peat. Spring is the only season without excessive rain, and ploughing or digging in autumn or winter even if possible is unprofitable. Winter wheat is a risky crop in most parts, and the emphasis is on spring corn, especially oats. This meant that the arable land was free of crops from October to April, and it allowed pasturing and manuring by livestock for rather more than half the year. So deep-rooted is this communal pasturing that there are districts in Donegal where to this day the livestock of the whole townland has the run of all the farms through the winter. And elsewhere, as I know to my cost, having tried for many years to cultivate a garden in the Mountains of Mourne, one's neighbours have a lingering habit of ignoring the fences at that season, when food for livestock is scarce.

Manuring and treading of the infield by cattle and sheep were supplemented in spring by quantities of manure taken from the cabins, 'some houses having . . . from ten to fifteen

[1]Antrim: Ordnance Survey Memoirs, Rathlin Island (1830); Cork and Kerry: Lord Dufferin, *Irish Emigration* (1867), 349.
[2]P. Knight, *Erris in the Irish Highlands* (1836), 47.
[3]ibid. For Norwegian parallels see *The Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 4 (1956), 17–81, 77.
[4]W. Tighe, *Statistical Observations, County of Kilkenny* (1802), 419.
[5]Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 117.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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tons weight of dung, and only cleaned out once a year!'[1] Sea wrack and shell sand were carted up to thirty miles inland from the coast.[2] In the absence of permanent fences the majority of the cattle must be moved away during the summer and those remaining carefully herded or tethered on the outfield, or put in temporary enclosures to manure that part of the outfield which was due for cultivation.[3] In its origins and full development the rundale system depended on the movement of most of the livestock to summer booleys situated some distance away. Here the widely distributed uplands and boglands played their part in the traditional economy. Although late survivals of the booleying system are hard to find, little of it managing to outlive the crisis of the Great Famine, we are beginning to track down its history and significance. The Irish texts are as disappointing and vague as they are in many matters touching the common people, but folk-memory comes to our aid. There are stories, and place-name evidence, from most parts of the country, and regional variants of the practice are being studied and mapped.[4]

We give first some quotations from the few discerning observers who drew attention to the practice. Edmund Spenser's enlightened spirit of inquiry is shown in his remark: 'Have you ever heard what was the occasion and first beginning of this custom? for it is good to know the same.' He writes, in 1595, 'There is one use amongst them, to keep their cattle and to live themselves the most part of the year in boolies, pasturing upon the mountain and waste wild places.'[5] His objections to the system, however, reveal his Englishry: the booleys hid outlaws and loose people, and the wandering life made the Irish barbarous. The following brief reference comes from O'Flaherty's famous account of West Connacht: 'In summertime they drive their cattle to the mountains, where such as look to the cattle live in small cabins for that season.'[6] In the eighteenth

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 17.
[2] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country* (1951), 141.
[3] W. Harris, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Down* (1744), 131.
[4] J. M. Graham, 'Transhumance in Ireland', in *The Advancement of Science*, 37 (1953), 74–9.
[5] Quoted in H. Morley, *Ireland Under Elizabeth and James I* (1890), 67.
[6] R. O'Flaherty, *H'Iar Connaught* (1684), 17.

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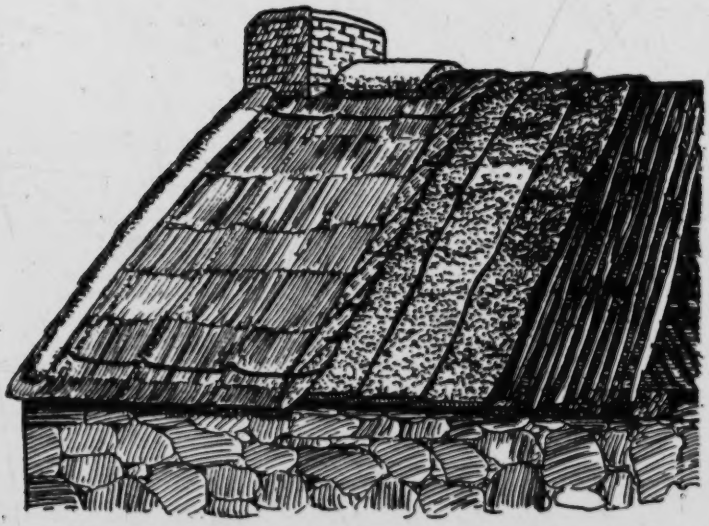

FIG. 14. Detail of scollop thatch, Co. Armagh, showing roof construction, sods and mud coping (after R. H. Buchanan).

hipped. The best work is seen on houses of the jamb-wall type.

824 342 Oat-straw, despite its poor lasting qualities, is employed for thatching in some districts, because it is the only available material. Being pliable it is widely used for patching. In the old days outfield straw was preferred for thatching because it was tougher than that grown on the infield. Wheat or rye is much more durable than oat straw and rye is specially grown for its straw in parts of Donegal, where I have known flax also cultivated to provide thatching material. Reeds are fairly commonly employed in the south-west and locally elsewhere if no straw is available. I have seen heather used in north Donegal, and in other areas marram grass, rushes and 'mountain grass' (probably *molinea*). The expert thatcher prefers his straw to be cut with a sickle and thrashed by hand and he scorns machine-thrashed straw. Best of all is straw from which the corn has been removed by hand-scutching or 'lashing' over a stick or stone, the 'barrel' of the straw being thus unbroken (Chapter XV).

● [241]

342 Nowadays a thatched roof is becoming a mark of sophistication,

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X

PLOUGH AND SPADE

STRONG arms have been the Irish labourer's passport to labouring jobs overseas, and it may be recalled that the word 'navvy' derives from the canal-diggers or navigators, many of them Irish, who opened the waterways of industrial England. Later it was Irish labourers who built the first railroad tracks of North America. Those arms were toughened by spade-work in field and bog, for the Irish spade is much more than a gardening tool: it was, and still is in backward areas and in the boglands, an implement for field cultivation and for cutting turf. The small field pattern of all except the most fertile regions is in part a reflection of this historic fact. An acre or two and often less in area, the tiny hillside fields are a measure of spade work just as the wide prairie wheatlands mirror the multiple plough or the mounded garden plots of an African village are the mark of women's work with mattock and digging-stick. Even in the deep-soiled lowlands where the plough is now universal the observant eye, still more the viewer from the air, will pick out the narrow ridges made by the spade faintly showing, as in a palimpsest, through the more regular pattern of wide plough ridges. In hilly country, especially in the west, the spade is still in common use in the fields, and the traveller moving about Ireland in spring, when the potatoes are being planted, will notice an astonishing variety of spades in use. Even in districts where the plough is universal the spade may still be pressed into service to deal with stony patches or awkward corners, and I have seen it supplementing the plough in another way by being tied on to a lea plough to convert it into a double-sided drill plough.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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ploughs were known in parts of Celtic Ireland, but the light plough or *ard* almost certainly prevailed, and it is unlikely that ploughs of any kind were employed outside the 'few favoured acres' of the infield. A light plough, at any rate, would be unfit to break the tough sod of the outfield, which was allowed to rest for long periods. Even today the answer I have been given when I have asked ridgemakers in old outfield why they were using spades has been: "Tis too tough for the plough!' Ploughing 'by the tail', similarly, becomes intelligible only if one envisages it as restricted to infield cultivation. The iron plough with curved mould board did not reach the outlying corners of the country until late in the nineteenth century, and down to the time of the famine iron ploughs were used only in progressive areas where there were improving landlords. The prototype of these ploughs was the Scottish two-horse swing plough invented by James Small about the year 1765. By the end of the century it had reached Ireland (and also Norway) and it was a powerful instrument in breaking down the archaic system of openfield husbandry. The Irish were amazed when they first saw a ploughman with a Scots plough both driving the horses and holding the stilts.[1]

Under the traditional system ploughing was 'merely marking the land with furrows'[2]: a spade or mattock was commonly needed to turn back the earth, and to force the share into the ground it was often necessary to have a man walking alongside the plough, pressing down on the beam with a stout stick. No bits or reins were used, and the plough itself required two men or a man and a boy, 'one to hold and one to drive', that is one holding the plough stilts and the other leading the horses by walking backwards before them. Evidently the man at the handles needed to give all his attention to the plough. It was, as a Cavan man described it to me, a process of 'jerking up and down'. Many of these practices were probably taken over from the days of ox-teams. Ploughing with oxen is believed to have died out in late medieval times, though it was reintroduced by some landowners in the late eighteenth century. The small farmer did not use oxen for the plough because unlike horses

[1] R. Thompson, *Meath* (1802), 111.
[2] J. Weld, *Roscommon* (1832), 656.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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they could not be put to other purposes such as going to the fair.

The wooden plough has now been almost entirely replaced by the iron plough, but in many districts a wooden plough, often converted from a lea plough, is preferred for opening drills (Fig. 42). The potato growers of the kingdom of Mourne in Co. Down, for example, find that it suits their stony soils and is less likely to be damaged by boulders. The rough wooden mould-boards carry the earth with them and distribute it more evenly than the iron drill-plough, which tends, moreover, to 'put a skin' on the soil and to pile up pointed ridges which would require to have their tops flattened later.

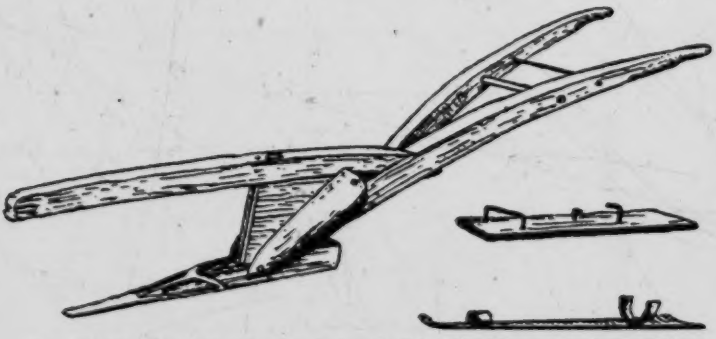

FIG. 42. Wooden drill plough and plough slides, Co. Down: the lower slide is of iron.

The improved wooden plough did not reach remote hill regions until roads were built after the middle of the eighteenth century. Even in the nineteenth century it is described as a newcomer in Co. Donegal, where spade labour had previously been supplemented only by 'a crooked stick armed with a bit of iron, with a second stick grafted to it to give two handles'.[1] This archaic implement must have resembled the wooden 'ard' (araire) of Mediterranean lands. It was so light that when the improved wooden plough with mould-board was introduced into Donegal the ponies were not equal to the task of pulling it. In west Cork the new wooden ploughs were not to be

[1] John Hamilton, *Sixty Years Experience as an Irish Landlord*, 47.

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seen on the small farms until after the Great Famine: 'the things called ploughs would only scratch the surface, a log of wood sharpened and shod with iron'.[1] This 'poorer sort of plough' was made of alder in Co. Londonderry.[2] Observers attributed the Irish addiction to cross-ploughing to the fact that the ribs of unploughed land could only be broken by this means. Small squarish cultivation plots and fields are a natural consequence of cross-ploughing.

It seems that even these light ploughs, quite incapable of penetrating lea ground, were pulled by three or four horses abreast, 'so weak and small are the horses'.[3] Thus 'coaring' (coaration) was necessary, though one suspects that tradition rather than need lay behind the large teams. In the seventeenth century four horses abreast pulled the plough by the tails in Co. Clare, 'which was the custom all over Ireland. The tackle and traces being made of gadds or withies of twigs twisted, would be broken to pieces otherwise . . . But the horses being sensible stop until the ploughman lifts the plough over the rock.'[4] At the same time we find complaints from the midland counties that the native plough was 'heavy and unmanageable, distressing to men and horses.[5] Here we probably have to deal with the descendant of the heavy Anglo-Norman plough.

Unfortunately we have no details of the Irish *ard*. One would like to know, for instance, whether it turned the furrow or rather threw the earth—for it merely scratched the soil—to the left or to the right. It has been found that in certain parts of western Europe left-sided ploughs are traditional whereas, of course, the common plough is almost universally right-sided. Mr. Robert Aitken has traced the left-sided plough in a clearly defined area of south France and north-east Spain.[6] The explanation may be that in these areas cultivation was originally done with a foot plough, for which the right foot was used, so that the soil, as with the Scottish caschrom, was turned to the left, and that the plough when adopted became a traction-

[1] W. Bence Jones, *A Life's Work in Ireland* (1880), 20.
[2] G. V. Sampson, *Memoir* (1814), 290.
[3] W. Shaw Mason, 2 (1816), s.v. Sligo.
[4] *Dineley's Tour in Ireland* (1661), Ed. J. Graves, (1870), 162.
[5] W. Shaw Mason, 2 (1816), s.v. King's Co. and Queen's Co.
[6] R. Aitken, *Man*, 1953, 286.

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version of the foot-plough. This is an almost unexplored field of rural history. Mr. Aitken is of the opinion, however, that the left-sided plough goes with the use of the right hand as holding hand.

At any rate it is interesting to find that in Ireland the majority of diggers use the right foot, and although in theory the wooden foot-rest of the native one-eared spade can be fitted either to left or right of the narrow blade it is, in the west, almost invariably on the right side. Presumably only habitually left-handed people use the left foot. In eastern Ireland, on the other hand, and particularly in the Protestant districts of the north-east, the left foot is normally the digging-foot, though judging from the proportions of right to left (about one to three in the north-east), the old Irish stocks continue to dig with the right foot. Hence there is a basis of fact in the phrase 'digging with the wrong foot'. (To say that someone digs with the other foot is in Ireland an oblique way of referring to his religious faith.) The old Irish spade, we have seen, is a highly specialized tool. It may have been preceded by some kind of hoe or planting stick such as are represented today by the graffan or the steeveen which we describe in the following chapter.

We have no direct evidence of Bronze Age ploughs in Ireland, though marks of furrows have been observed underneath burial barrows of that period in Jutland and Holland and it has been claimed that the *ard* had reached the west Baltic region before the end of the Neolithic phase. However this may be the sod-cutting spade, which could be supplemented by the wooden shovel, is not likely to have been introduced much before the beginning of the Christian era, since it required an efficient knowledge of iron-working. By facilitating the building of ridges it would have improved crop yields during a climatic period, the sub-Atlantic, which was even wetter than at present. A mould-board plough capable of forming ridges did not reach Ireland on present evidence until about the seventh century, and as we have seen it had not been adopted in parts of the west until the nineteenth century. Thus the narrow spade, coming into use at about the same time as oats, would have been a factor in stabilizing settlement by permitting ridge cultivation on the outfield grazing ground round about. This is speculative,

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XI

LAZY-BEDS

241 IN the Western Isle, as throughout Highland Britain, climate and custom have conspired to limit the farmer's work in the fields to little more than half the year, from March to October. It is geared to a régime of spring-sown crops, supplemented since the agrarian revolution by intensive hay-farming. Wheat-growing is now encouraged under the Republican drive towards economic self-sufficiency, but it is a risky crop except in the drier eastern lowlands, and though it was the chief cereal in early prehistoric times there is some evidence to suggest that it was then a spring-sown crop. Barley has been grown in small amounts since early times and was especially popular in remote places during the great days of poteen-making, but it is now insignificant as a crop in comparison with oats and potatoes. Before the coming of the potato the oats (corn) crop was all-important, and the routine of its cultivation set the pattern of the farming year and was closely integrated with pastoral needs. In bad seasons even the oats may not ripen properly, and their safe harvesting is at best a gamble in the oceanic climate of the west where autumn is the wettest season of the year. Thus great toil was endured and every care taken in the preparations for sowing, rites of propitiation were performed during the growing season, and every chance of harvesting the crop was quickly seized. It was in the nature of a rescue operation, and indeed the Irish farmer always speaks of 'saving' his harvest. The normal worries of a cereal farmer are here accentuated, and the harvest period is so vital that autumn in rural Ireland is always referred to as 'harvest'.

241 461 Spells of fine weather in spring and harvest were times of

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intense effort, when the toilers were spurred on by rivalries in their efforts to avoid the bad luck which tradition wisely bestowed on the laggards. The seasonal festivals which marked the end of these periods of strain—at the beginning of May and November—were not merely celebrations of work completed and a new season begun, but also the occasion for the release of emotional stresses. The Irishman's capacity for bouts of strenuous work, and his more notorious addiction to spells of complete idleness, are surely related to the experience accumulated through countless springs, harvests, and winters. Winter was a dead season for man as for the world around him. It was no time for fairs, fighting or raiding, for selling or even stealing animals which were not worth the trouble of stealing: the problem was to maintain life in them.

Long tradition explains the neglect of winter ploughing which is still characteristic of the greater part of Ireland. The infield stubble was required to augment the very poor and limited outfield grazing available for the wintering stock. There are some townlands, in the west, where to this day all the fields become common grazing during the winter, and only the strongly-enclosed 'gardens' are safe places to grow cabbages, for instance, or a little rye for the thatch. Moreover even with improved ploughs the grass tends to grow in the furrows of ploughed land during a mild winter. And when it is recalled that much of the old infield land was on sloping ground, if only for the sake of the natural drainage thus provided, it can be conceded that there was wisdom in not breaking the earth in winter and opening the way to soil erosion. Moreover the loss of fertility by the leaching of exposed soils can be serious.

Preparing the land for seed had thus to await the spring, and pressure of time as well as the uncertainties of weather strengthened the tradition of co-operative labour in the form of pooled plough-teams in the infield and gangs of ridgemakers in the outfield. The plough-team, normally of four horses or oxen supplied by as many neighbours, had to be supplemented by spade and mell, for the furrows were badly turned, and after the seed-bed had been prepared and the corn sown the seed was covered with shovelled soil. In order to facilitate drainage,

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LAZY-BEDS

241 476 in the days before field drains, the land was ploughed in ridges or 'lands' some ten or twelve feet wide, separated by trenches which provided the soil for burying the corn. Lazy-beds, that is spade-ridges for potatoes, made even heavier demands on many hands (Fig. 46). A writer in the 1830s describing the scene in the fields as neighbours worked together in teams, remarks that 'these congregations give vivacity to the labour . . . and occasionally an animated shout is set up by the whole body'.[1] The pooling of labour resources, 'sharing' or 'morrowing'—there are several terms for this co-operative system—is still by no means uncommon even if there is nowadays less need for it. It not only cements social relationships but provides the [461] stimulus of competitive effort. In the north of Ireland Protestant and Roman Catholic neighbours frequently share their labour in this way.

FIG. 46. Ploughed ridges, Co. Cavan, and spade ridges (lazy-beds), Co. Mayo.

241 By tradition the vital spring-time preparations are hedged around with tabus and omens. The ploughman should turn his horses with the sun, from left to right, to invoke its blessing on the work, and when yoking or unyoking his team his horses' heads should be facing south. Friday—which is regarded as a lucky day to begin all operations not needing iron—is the best day to begin sowing, and Good Friday is best of all. The sower going forth should begin his labours with the solemn words 'In the name of God', and he should give the horses a handful of corn from the seed-bag and throw a handful of earth over each horse's rump. Ashes from the turf fire were sometimes mixed with the seed for luck and there are traditions of the ashes of the midsummer bonfires being kept for this purpose.

In some parts of the country, chiefly in the south and east, the sower carried a straw seed-basket, and this is presumably

[1] Isaac Weld, *Roscommon* (1832), 660.

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an English introduction since 'sowing baskets' are listed in the medieval pipe-rolls of the Pale. In parts of the west, for example Mayo, a skin tray was used for sowing. But the usual Irish method is to sow from a linen sheet, kept specially for the purpose, which is tied round the sower. The seed is thrown with a one-handed cast, and it is not everyone's privilege to be allowed to undertake this important task. It calls for skill and concentrated care, for 'a missed bit' is a bad omen, foretelling death [787] The seed should all be safely 'buried' by the beginning of May, and in Co. Armagh the first cuckoo's call was taken as a sign. To be found sowing corn after this was a mark of deep disgrace: [825] the laggard was labelled 'a cuckoo farmer'. 241 ●

With modern ploughs and improved drainage it is not often, save in the tiny fields of the west, that one comes across cereal crops sown in ridges, but the lazy-bed method is very generally employed for potatoes and other crops where the spade is used, though the great bulk of the potato crop is sown in drills. The potato ridge presumably derives its name, lazy-bed, from the fact that the sod under the ridge is not dug: the bed is built up on top of the grass with sods and soil dug from the trenches between the ridges. Not only does this method make full use of the humus and decaying grass but it prevents the sets from becoming waterlogged and rotting, for the whole bed is raised above the water-table. And the unbroken sod checks the downwash of plant nutrients. The trenches or furrows between the ridges provide open drains, and the lazy-beds are always carefully aligned with the slope of the land. Moreover, when the trenches are dug a second time for earthing the potatoes, they often go deep enough to penetrate the hard layer of iron pan which tends to form under heavily leached soils by the washing down of iron salts. This the old-fashioned plough could not do. Breaking the impermeable pan not only improves the drainage but provides minerals which are returned to the topsoil when the potatoes are earthed. The ridges in which potatoes are grown in their Andean homeland appear to be similar to the Irish lazy-beds, and tuber crops throughout the tropics are planted in ridges or mounds, but the ridge-technique is certainly older than the potato in Ireland. Clearly an efficient shovel is a requirement in the construction of ridges of any 241 412

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241 412 width, and it is here that the long-handled shovel comes into its own. In Britain such a shovel, which remains characteristic of south-west England, is of at least Roman antiquity. Specimens from the Roman period are, however, made entirely of wood, and several similar shovels of unknown age have been found in the Irish bogs (Fig. 47). In the west, down to famine times, the common shovel was made of a single piece of wood, usually willow, shod with a narrow strip of iron along the edge.[1]

FIG. 47. Long-handled shovels used for finishing the ridges. The wooden one was found at Glenoe, Co. Antrim.

241 [407] In some districts potato ridges are made with the plough, either with an ordinary lea-plough or else with a special paring-plough, fitted with a wide sock, which reproduces the special feature of the lazy-bed, that is, it does not break the grass of the bed but inverts a wide sod on to it from either side. In both instances the trench is then broken up by a plough with the mould board removed to provide earth for shovelling on to the ridges. The much wider corn ridges were normally made with the plough, except in those retarded mountainy districts where the plough seems never to have been adopted. Wheat was grown on narrower ridges, some five to seven feet wide. In Co. Londonderry it was customary to plough a 'rid-hint', that is, to take a second furrow out of the subsoil of the trench to facilitate drainage.[2] We can readily picture the arable land as eighteenth century observers saw it, with 'the strips piled high and the furrows scraped bare'. Lazy-beds vary in width according to local conditions and conventions and may be as little as

[1] W. R. Wilde, *Catalogue* (1857), 207.
[2] G. V. Sampson, *Memoir* (1814), 282.

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two feet or as much as eight feet wide, the furrows between them being from one to three feet in width. These dimensions and the different methods of building the ridges are intimately related to the depth and quality of the soil and to the types of spade used in each locality. Both the breadth and length of the ridges are commonly measured by the spade, and the term score-ground, applied in Co. Kerry to potato land let in conacre, that is from year to year, refers to twenty spade-lengths. When the crop is lifted the ridges are roughly levelled, and the following year they are split, that is the new furrow is dug in the middle of the old ridge.

It is not easy to describe the process of ridge-making with the spade and impossible to portray all the varieties of technique employed. It is back-breaking work, yet it is performed with an easy rhythm and a seemingly effortless and almost mechanical efficiency. In its simplest form the grassy strip which is to become the furrow is notched centrally down its length and the sods on each side are each undercut by two spade-thrusts and levered over on to the beds, where they lie flat, grass to grass, like closed hinges (Fig. 48). Normally the manure has already

FIG. 48. Lazy-beds.

been spread on the beds, and if the potato sets have also been planted all that is needed to complete the ridge is to break the earth of the furrow and shovel it on to the ridge. More commonly, however, the beds are fully prepared before the sets are planted, and it is the task of the women and children to follow the ridgemakers and thrust the potatoes into the sandwich of sods and manure. This is the method appropriate to the wetter

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241 west, for it means that the ridges can be prepared beforehand as opportunity offers. What is known as the Munster mode of planting 'with the back of the spade' is to thrust the narrow spade through the inverted top sod and drop the set behind the blade as it is levered forward. On the average three rows of potatoes go to each bed, but there are also one- two- and four-set ridges.

241 412 A special wooden dibber known as the steeveen, kibbin (little-spade) or gugger is employed for planting in Cavan, Leitrim and Longford and may perhaps be correlated with the heavy loy as another archaic tool which has kept its hold in that area. The steeveen with its conical head (Fig. 48) will break through the toughest sod and open a way for the young sprouts. Typically [462] 'guggering' is woman's work, the children following, [857] dropping in the sets and closing the hole with a fork or a mell. I like to think that the steeveen is descended from that universal tool of the women of humble cultivating societies, the digging or planting stick, remote ancestor of the spade. It is a plausible theory that the crops of wheat and barley sown by the first Irish cultivators were planted in this way in the ashes of burnt woodland on the mountainsides. Larger dibbers or 'stamps' with several teeth for planting corn were used until quite recently in some counties, for example Armagh (Fig. 49).

[407]

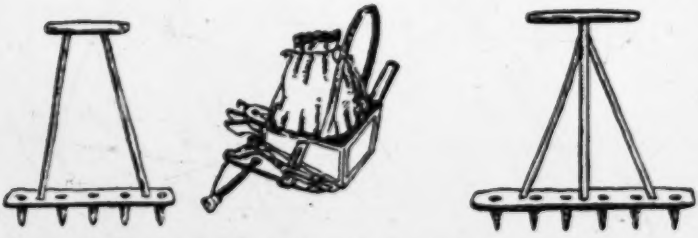

FIG. 49. Dibbers and (*centre*) sowing fiddle, Co. Armagh.

They are probably the descendents of specimens introduced by English 'planters' of the early seventeenth century. It is the [539] dibberhole which is referred to in the rhyme which has outlived the action it once accompanied:

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241 ●
[539]

Four seeds in a hole,
One for the rook
One for the crow
One to rot
And one to grow.

The sowing fiddle which scatters seed broadcast and which may frequently be seen in use in some districts, for example Co. Down, is another introduction from England which has survived here longer than in its presumed home (Fig. 49). The fiddler makes a striking figure, seen from a distance, as he strides steadily up and down the field with his silent instrument; he must beware of changing his pace whether going uphill or downhill or the crop will grow in uneven strips. [407]

In many parts of the world burning of the vegetation is a necessary preliminary to shifting cultivation, and the use of fire in the preparation of the outfield for ridge cultivation therefore raises some interesting questions. We know that the burning of sods pared from rough pasture, sometimes called 'denshiring' from its reputed Devonshire home, was widely practised in Ireland down to the time of the famine. In the early nineteenth century nine-tenths of the potatoes grown in Co. Clare were planted on burnt land,[1] and a special skinning plough was used to pare off the sod. Elsewhere the graffan and flachter were put to a like purpose. From a description of Donegal in 1880 it seems that the drying and warming of the soil were regarded as more important than the fertilizing ashes: 'There is on the fresh bogs a process of heating resorted to in the Spring, i.e., the end of April and the first half of May: the piles of earth are never allowed to burn out into a fire but combustion is kept stopped up within the mass . . . the heated earth, not ashes, is scattered and the first crop put in.'[2] Where the land was of fairly good quality only the furrow sods were burnt. They were stood on edge to dry and then burnt in piles on the ridges, after which the ashes were spread and the potato sets planted in them, to be covered with earth dug from the trenches in the usual way.[3] The process of paring and burning seems to

[1] H. Dutton, *Clare* (1808), 36.
[2] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881* (1887), Appendix B, 137.
[3] R. Thompson, *Meath*, 272.

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241 have been greatly accelerated in the eighteenth century, thanks no doubt to the stimulus of contemporary English practice, but it may well be that the custom perpetuates the prehistoric method of clearing the land for cultivation. The fact that burning the land was prohibited by various Acts of Parliament in Ireland would point to its being another abominable native custom, like ploughing by the tail. We have referred to the graffan as a [412] skinning tool of ancient lineage, and may add that in Devon and Cornwall the implement used 'in the infancy of the art of paring'[1] was a mattock or adze which also served as a clod-breaker. The 'hack' of the Pennine country comes to mind here. The flachter, the Highland equivalent of the breast-plough which became the standard English paring instrument, may well be, in fact, the ancestor of the breast-plough, and I suggest that it came into use for skinning the outfield before burning and planting. We know that outfield cultivation of burnt-over forest lasted in France, in the Vosges country, into the eighteenth century, and the custom probably survived long enough in Ireland to be replaced by 'paring and burning'. This view is certainly in line with the other evidences of cultural continuity from prehistoric times. The customs of throwing the ashes of May Day and Midsummer bonfires into the fields and the mixing of peat ash from the hearth with the seed corn may be magical residues of the ancient practice of firing the land before sowing.

241 We shall describe in a later chapter the various methods of carrying manure to the fields: here we may refer to another 412 simple implement which serves in the preparation of the ridges. This is the clod-breaking wooden mallet or mell, resembling a croquet mallet (Fig. 1). The subject of our drawing might have been taken straight from the Luttrell Psalter of the fourteenth century, but it is a mell which I saw in use in Co. 241 Armagh a few years ago. Hurling sticks served the same pur- 526 pose in some southern counties,[2] and one wonders whether the Gaelic game of hurling evolved in this way by playfully knocking a rounded stone among the rigs. Patrick Geddes amusingly, if erroneously, traced the origin of the game of golf back to the

[1] *Loudan's Encyclopaedia of Agriculture* (1831).
[2] W. Tighe, *Kilkenny* (1802), 182.

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idle Scots shepherd who with his crook knocked a white sea pebble into a rabbit hole among the dunes. And one recalls the theory that the game of cricket, with its 22-yard pitch, had its beginnings in the English openfields among ploughboys (players) and landlords' sons (gentlemen) who threw clods at the ploughman's marking sticks across the chain-wide acre strips completed at the end of a day's work. At any rate cricket has not strayed far from the English openfields and village greens, and in Ireland it clings to the larger towns and to the English-settled areas along the east coast.

Among other implements for preparing the soil the roller is probably of no great antiquity, though examples of wood or stone are of considerable interest. Alternatively, flat boulders or specially-built clod-slipes are driven over the ploughed ground, the driver being carried along on the platform thus provided and adding to its weight. I have seen the former in Co. Wexford and the latter in Co. Down. In the west the breaking of clods on the ridges is done by hand with a heavy rake (Fig. 1), and the 'harrows' which were formerly pulled by the horse's tail was a similar implement, a block of wood armed with a few wooden teeth. Even the larger harrows were a source of amusement to visiting farmers like Arthur Young, 'more fit to raise laughter than soil', as one observer put it.

The weeding and protection of the young corn were serious matters in the days when a patch of oats provided a family with its only cereal food. The tethering and herding of livestock were universal habits, and hand-weeding was another task for the young folk. O'Flaherty writes of Connacht: 'They go and lie prostrate or sit upon the corn, to weed it with their bare hands, leaving nothing behind but pure corn'.[1] Swedes are almost invariably weeded and thinned by hand. Thistles growing in corn or flax are pulled with special pincers or 'clips' made either of iron or more usually of wood, of a type which is illustrated in the Luttrell Psalter. The very similar French weeders known as Havre pincers were also used for catching eels. Docks were removed with a heavy forked spud (Fig. 50). There were other less arduous ways of inducing a bounteous crop. The custom of placing a sickle in the corn-field at the

[1] R. O'Flaherty, *H'Iar Connaught* (1684), 59.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

241
[412]

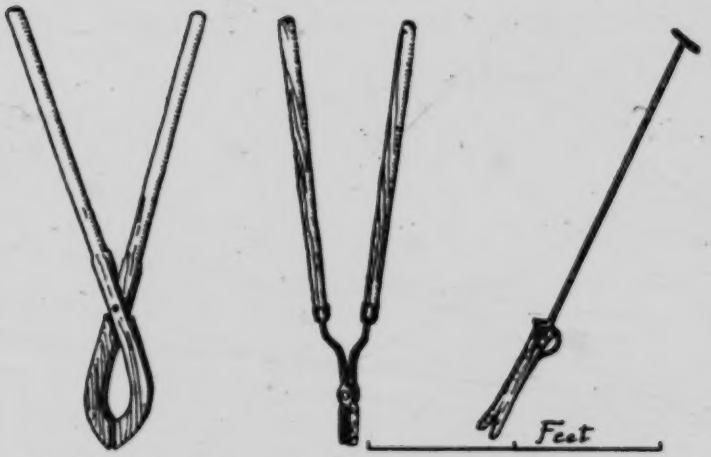

FIG. 50. Weeding 'clips', Antrim and Armagh, and iron dock-lifter, Antrim.

Midsummer festival was an easy way of showing the spirits of the corn what was expected of them. You might also hope to transfer ill-luck to someone else's crop by burying a dead animal, [787] a piece of meat, or even an egg on his land. It would be worth while listening for the call of the cuckoo on the first day of July, for to hear it was a sign of a good harvest. Prognostications were so many and so easily procured that they apparently provided a fatalistic society with a ready means of avoiding steady work. In some parts of the country, docks, thistles and [824] couch grass were apparently regarded as a good sign, because they kept the crop warm.[1]

[1] W. Bence Jones, *A Life's Work in Ireland*, 87.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

XII

HARVEST

THANKS to the necessity of 'winning' (seasoning) hay and corn in the fields before the crops are carried home, harvest time drags on from late summer to the edge of winter, and the word 'harvest' as we have seen is a synonym for autumn. In this pastoral Irish country the hay harvest is nowadays of vital importance in farm economy, yet I cannot find any evidence that hay played a significant part in the traditional Gaelic system of farming. It is the sickle, not the scythe, which figures in folk-lore and in place-names, and the scythe seems to be a relative newcomer in most parts of the country. It requires a stone-free sward which would be hard to seek on hill farms. The business of hay-making was, I believe, of little importance until the economic changes of the agrarian revolution and the introduction of rotation grass. In the North the date of the first hay-cutting is fixed by a celebrated but relatively new festival, the Orangeman's day on the 12th of July. After hay comes flax, which is pulled from late July to mid-August, followed by wheat and barley in the areas where they are grown, by the corn harvest in September and the potato-lifting in October. In bad years hay may still be uncut in late August, the mountain corn is green even at the end of September, and late-cut corn sometimes stays stacked in the fields up to Christmas—indeed there are records of the grain being reaped after Christmas[1]—but traditionally all harvest work was completed by All-Hallows.

In Scandinavia it has been claimed that hay-making began in pre-historic times as a result of the climatic deterioration which took place during the last millennium B.C. In Ireland with its

[1]For example in 1817. J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews*, 25.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

described as a gathering of the whole people, a time of feasting and festivals and courting. That there was magic as well as manure in the golden weed is apparent from the urge to possess some share, however small, of the harvest. In the kingdom of Mourne 'men would walk three miles to be present at the division of the wrack and were content to take back a single creelful on their backs. They would gather the bits of wrack on their knees, scraping them up with their hands as though it was gold dust.'[1] Here the division was by lot following a given signal—in one case a bush hoisted on a tall pole—for the farmers concerned to assemble. Wrack rights and ways of access are sometimes still bitterly fought over though they now have little meaning.

Spring was also the season for gathering other gifts of the sea, the shellfish and the shell sand which was carted inland and even taken on horseback for distances of up to thirty miles. Prized because 'it cut up the clay', it also provided much needed lime for acid soils. In South Donegal boatloads of mussels used to be scraped off the rocks with spades and distributed in creels for spreading on the potato ridges. In Dundalk Bay, Mr. H. G. Tempest tells me, mussels for the table and for bait are scraped up from boats with long-handled rakes (Fig. 74). Easter and Good Friday in particular were times for visiting the shore. Of the now deserted Blasket Islands Thomas O'Crohan writes: 'it has always been the custom here to go and get kitchen from the strand to eat on Good Friday.'[2] Winkles (willucks) were the favourite food on these occasions, but after St. Patrick's Day, they say, limpets are better eating than winkles. Shellfish were boiled in milk to give food for children and for calves. Sandeels were pulled up with a bent iron rod or a blunted sickle: in Mayo 'they are taken on moonlit nights by considerable gatherings of young people, the object being as much the amusement as the sandeels'.[3] In Donegal 'for scallops and oysters, when the tide was out, the young women waded into the sea, some of them naked, and by armfuls brought them to the shore.'[4]

[1] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, 144.
[2] T. O'Crohan, *The Islandman*, 29.
[3] C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*.
[4] A. B., *The Rosses in 1753*, 201.

[Text continues on p. 226]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Introduction

101 131 105 178 [162] INIS BEAG is a fictitious name for one of the many inhabited islands of the Irish Gaeltacht.[1] It is a rocky, barren protuberance in the ocean, buffeted constantly by wind and storm, where 350 hardy people eke out a meager existence. This tiny island is renowned not only for the distinctive folk culture possessed by its inhabitants, but for its numerous, well-preserved antiquities which attest to at least 5000 years of almost continuous human habitation, and its great beauty of land and seascape. During the past 150 years, first scientists, then writers, and more recently film, radio, and television producers have visited Inis Beag, and their many works have served to familiarize the world with the culture, albeit romanticized, [241] of the islanders. As a result of literary publicity, which commenced in the first decade of this century, increasing numbers of tourists have been drawn to Inis Beag [241] over the years. The cultural forms which are most publicized and attract the most [501] attention from tourists are the traditional garb of the folk, their skill in rowing [197] the famed canoe, called *curach*, the manner in which they manufacture soils and grow in them a variety of crops, and their Gaelic speech.

114 121 127 My wife and I were introduced to Inis Beag during a short visit to Ireland in 1955, when we viewed the island from the nearby coast and talked of its cultural past and present with scholars in Dublin, Cork, and Galway. Between 1955 and 1958, we immersed ourselves in writings pertaining to Irish history and culture, and during the three summer months of the latter year we visited several peasant communities on the mainland and three islands, including Inis Beag, of the Gaeltacht. We made plans to come back to Inis Beag as soon as possible to undertake research, and in 1959 and 1960 we were able to spend the greater part of a year there, during which time we visited briefly on three occasions a neighboring island—Inis Thiar[2]—and several institutions on the mainland to conduct library and other research. We returned eight times to Inis Beag and Dublin for

131 197 162 [1] The Gaeltacht—areas in which 25 to 100 percent of the inhabitants speak Irish—embraces portions of 12 northern, western, and southern counties and a population of approximately 600,000 people (Freeman 1960:166).

103 192 [2] In Gaelic, Inis Thiar (also a fictitious name) means Western Isle, and Inis Beag is translated Little Isle.

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visits ranging in length from one to seven weeks between 1961 and 1966 to complete our project. During the 19 months that we dwelled on the island, most of our research was directed toward documenting the contemporary culture of Inis Beag: its technological, economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also investigated informal and formal education and the personality traits created by it; reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many sorts and probing the memories of elderly respondents; and recorded cultural change in process.

The research techniques that we employed are standard ethnographic ones: the guided and open-ended interview, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, photography, and phonography. Two departures from methodological orthodoxy were our use, as projective devices, of literary works and a six-verse two-verse ballad that I composed. A dozen islanders of both sexes and three age groups read at our request three books portraying Inis Beag culture, and we recorded and analyzed their varied responses. My ballad, now embedded in the island folklore tradition, is based on a shipwreck and rescue off Inis Beag that we witnessed, and a series of incidents which ensued during the following months. Alterations made by local singers after it was completed and the reactions to it by the islanders gave us insights into Inis Beag culture and personality which would have been difficult to obtain under other circumstances of fieldwork. I must add that the ballad was a product of exuberant cultural involvement and the satisfactions of "creative endeavor." Its research implications were unanticipated.

The Inis Beag islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect, according to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960:1): the population has maintained its stability for at least two hundred years; there is a strong bond between the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with the major source of their livelihood; production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a simple technology, which includes as primary implements the digging stick, spade, and scythe; the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to their laws; the people long have been exposed to urban influences, have borrowed cultural elements from other rural areas on the mainland, and have integrated them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under foreign rule for over three centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of dependence and, at the same time, one of hostility toward the government which continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those in most other peasant groups are low death and illiteracy rates. The Irish shun the term peasant as applied to individuals or communities, for the same reason that elitists in developing countries eschew the term primitive as applied to traditional cultural forms found in societies incorporated into newly formed states. The causes of this attitude must be examined next.

During the past hundred years, Ireland has experienced a vigorous nativistic movement—provoked by seven centuries of English domination, linked with nationalism as the Irish sought to assert their independence, focused on the

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is a three-story tower house with its south and west walls partially destroyed. The middle story of the castle rests on vaults, and there are carved corbels projecting from the north and east walls. It is believed that the castle was assaulted in 1652 from the land side by Cromwellian troops, who disembarked at the back of the island and hauled their heavy cannons across the limestone pavement, unimpeded by the stone fences which stand today, to the monastery above the tower.

Queen Elizabeth annexed Inis Beag for the Crown in 1586 because of its strategic position, after two contending Irish families had appealed to her following their fierce battle for its possession, in which all of the folk may have been slaughtered. From 1586 until the first decade of the eighteenth century, Commonwealth, Loyalist, and Williamite forces were stationed in Inis Beag most of the time, and until 1886, when obtained by the Irish Land Commission, the island was owned by a succession of absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. When Cromwellian troops forced the surrender of Loyalists in 1652, the population of Inis Beag once again may have been decimated, although one legend holds that only males were put to the sword. The island after 1655 became a port for transshipment of clerics who were exiled to the West Indies. This was the time when Cromwell revenged himself on Irish Catholics and their Protestant allies by appropriating for his followers more than half of the Irish soil and leveling harsh political, commercial, and religious penalties. Thousands of priests were banished, including all of the bishops for a time, in his crusade.

It was after the Restoration in 1660 that the land of Inis Beag was divided into quarters, half-quarters, and smaller units and assigned to families. My genealogical research reveals that all of the families of Inis Beag trace descent from immigrants who arrived in the island during and after the last half of the seventeenth century. The early arrivals, as well as any survivors, may have intermarried and interbred with soldiers posted in the island, for anthropometric and blood group analyses (buttressed by surname and historical evidence and local legend) show that the folk more closely resemble the northern English than they do their mainland cousins. A Dublin humor magazine featured a cartoon, not favored in nativistic quarters, showing Inis Beag men in traditional attire playing cricket.

The islanders still express considerable bitterness over the conditions of poverty and servitude experienced by their ancestors during the 300 years that they lived under alien landlords. All of the excesses of foreign domination suffered by mainland peasants were suffered by Inis Beag folk, but were aggravated by the ordinary hardships of island living. Little is known of local events in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, until the island was "rediscovered" by Petrie and O'Flaherty. There was trading between Inis Beag and communities along the mainland coast for many miles, and ships passing by often dropped anchor at the island; but at that time this region of Ireland was very much isolated and seldom visited. A military garrison once again was established in Inis Beag for a brief period during the Napoleonic Wars, when the English feared an invasion of the British Isles from the west by French forces. A watch tower was constructed on the island, one of a chain along the Atlantic coast of Ireland, to give early warning of invasion.

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823 [121] which give a trail its name. Folklorists have collected most of the place-names, and philologists have pondered the origins of no longer comprehended ones.

487 Trails also are referred to as roads or paths. Usually, they are bordered by stone fences from three to a dozen feet apart and are surfaced with fine gravel bound by clay. The 1842 Ordnance Survey Map shows that the network of trails in Inis Beag has remained much the same over the past century, although several [653] new paths have been added and all have been widened or otherwise improved. In recent years, the government has subsidized road improvement for several weeks each year during December and January. A senior and junior ganger supervise a group of fellow islanders—composed of those owning the gravel and clay deposits utilized, those owning land along the right of way, and those most needful of unemployment assistance—daily until the money appropriated for that year gives out. Nine major roads lead from the four villages to the back of the island; they roughly parallel each other and are reasonably straight once they climb the terraces. Crossing the middle of Inis Beag from one sound to the other necessitates traversing numerous fields and climbing high fences, since the four short paths running east and west linking five of the main roads at the back are found near the Atlantic shore. On the north side of the island, a road connects Terrace and Low Villages across the common land. This is the only major east to west artery and is the most traveled of the ten trails; passing between the cemetery and school, fences do not enclose it, and often drifting sand covers portions of it and must be shoveled away. A series of short connected paths make it possible to travel east and west along the terraces from one village to another above the main road.

312 Water is obtained from four principal wells near the villages and from numerous, less dependable springs at the back and along the shores of Inis Beag. Most householders also capture rain water from eaves troughs in barrels or small 312 cisterns. At one time, water was drawn from pools formed by the four major wells, 663 but now it is pumped from government built reservoirs. These reservoirs occasionally are broken open and water obtained directly from them by islanders who believe that the sealed structures and pipes leading from them to the pumps foster contamination. The government also sponsors the construction of water tanks in fields to accumulate rain water for pastured stock. Three of the wells are located in rift valleys, and the fourth is near the chapel; a potential fifth one is in the valley south of the lake, but at too great a distance from Terrace Village to have 312 been improved. Two minor unimproved springs used by villagers are situated on a terrace of the western promontory and below the post office. The springs near the coast and those at the back of the island are used mostly for watering stock, and they tend to become dry when rainfall is limited.

311 Inis Beag viewed from the top of the lighthouse presents a somber yet [333] strangely moving panorama of grey limestone pavement and fences, with patches [241] of green here and there. Many hundreds of fields meet the eye, about half of which support little or no soil, ranging in size from a fraction of an acre to over a dozen 333 acres. Three decades ago, it was possible to move easily from east to west across [653] the back of the island because the fences averaged only three feet in height; but [178] since that time, government subsidies supporting fence and field building have caused most of them to be raised to heights of from five to ten feet. The folk are

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skillful fence makers, and many incorporate various designs into their handiwork by using stones of different sizes and shapes. Stiles or openings in the fences connect a few fields, but gates seldom are employed; a man simply breaks down a stretch of fence to allow a horse or a cow to enter a pasture, then quickly rebuilds the fence. The outsider who believes this to be an easy task usually ends up with surplus stones, a disfigured fence, and maybe bruised fingers when he attempts to emulate the custom. 333

The hundreds of fields are located in dozens of land areas which bear names. Most writers assert that each plot has its own name, but in reality numerous fields are located in any one area. Thus, a man might send his son to dig potatoes in Garden of the Cobbler, that is, in the plot that he owns there; another man might go to milk a cow in his pasture in Garden of the Cobbler. A field will be assigned a new name only if its owner has another one in the same area, and then he might instead call it, for instance, New Field in the Garden of the Cobbler. Some land areas bear the names of persons and animals, others refer to geographical phenomena, while a few are linked to long forgotten historical events. 311 241 • 103

Over 50 coastal features also are named, from the Harbor of the Churchyard on the north, to Point of the Periwinkles on the south. Most of the place-names refer to rocks, flags, points, reefs, clefts, coves, channels, pools, low cliffs, events of the past, and small strands which mostly have disappeared. The freighter ran aground on a stony reef named Strand of the Sheep. This was a source of wry amusement to the rescued crew, but at one time the beach provided safe footing for sheep driven there to be washed before shearing or sale. One of the best known features is Piper's Rock, which figures prominently in legend. It is named after an island musician who long ago entered a cave above Terrace Village, which supposedly travels under the west sound and connects with another in Inis Thiar, and who never emerged again. In later years, bagpipe music was heard issuing forth from beneath the sea off the rock now named after the luckless fellow. 103 823

Inis Beag has four landing places for small craft along its shores, but none are large enough to accommodate the 550-ton government operated "steamer," which visits the island two to four times weekly. The main pier, also called the jetty, is 300 feet long and 15 feet wide and is protected on its windward side by a wall five feet high. Located just west of the strand (see Fig. 9), it is the third structure to occupy the site; the first pier was built in 1878 and the second in 1913, and the present one is an enlargement of its predecessor. Smaller piers are situated east of the lake, to provide Terrace Village access to the sea, and near the lighthouse. The former is used mostly to unload peat, or "turf," imported by hooker from the mainland and to carry passengers to and from the steamer, and the latter only to transfer supplies from Irish Lights Service vessels which anchor in the east sound. A slip on the west sound near Low Village is used by crews rowing between Inis Beag and Inis Thiar in their canoes. When tourists come ashore in the island, they usually do so for the thrill of riding the *currach* and viewing the more accessible historical sites and the much publicized folk; they remain only the hour or two that the steamer is anchored off the strand. Inis Beag has had regular steamer service since 1891, and before that time small sailing boats plied irregularly between island and mainland. 504 505 [175] [178]

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511 829 come ashore in the future, for his use of the term poverty when describing Inis Beag life in a series of articles. The islanders, however, constantly complain of their indigence privately and deprecate it and are embarrassed by it in the presence of strangers. Girls and young women are particularly disparaging, and elders are puzzled by this attitude because the lot of youth is so much easier than was that of their mothers and grandmothers. Those persons who extol island existence usually do so in a defensive manner; after conceding that goods are in short supply, albeit "no one suffers from want of food or clothing," they go on to stress the healthy climate of the island, the freedom and independence that they enjoy, the sanctity of Inis Beag and its many saints of the past, and the strength of Catholic belief. Sometimes the advocate is followed by a denunciation of urban life, where these essential characteristics are lacking, or by a recounting of the difficulties being encountered by a relative just arrived in Boston or London.

433 241 233 The subsistence economy of Inis Beag always has been dominated by agricultural pursuits, contrary to frequent assertions by writers that farming was subsidiary to fishing two generations ago. Most householders own land on which they grow potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes sally rods, and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and asses. Potatoes are the staple crop, and after they are harvested the land usually is seeded with grass and used as pasturage for a number of years before being replanted. Indigenous soils bearing grass at the back of the island also serve as pasturage, and horses and asses at times are permitted to roam the trails and common land to forage whatever they can [262] from the meager flora there. Supplementing potatoes in the diet are various vegetables, milk from cows and nanny goats, meat from island sheep and poultry, [342] fish, and other foods, many of which are imported and sold in the shops. Rye is [343] grown for thatching houses and contiguous outbuildings, as well as barns located [493] south of the terrace crest, and sally rods are used to weave several types of containers. The only vehicles in Inis Beag are three two-wheeled carts employed to transport heavy loads, such as building stones, along the rough and narrow trails. Most householders own asses or horses, often ridden, which carry burdens in baskets 433 or pull carts. Other subsistence activities are knitting, weaving, crocheting, tailoring, 28 shoemaking, and net making, although the last skill almost has died out.

433 [437] [28] A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and sheep reared or fattened in the island and of surplus potatoes, the collection of seaweed for extraction of its iodine content at a mainland factory, the manufacture of craft objects, and the keeping of tourists in private homes. Among the craft commodities produced are cable-knit sweaters, miniature *curach*, stockings knitted at the local factory in the coast guard station, and articles of clothing worn by the folk—woven belts, cowhide shoes, and shawls. These goods are sold both to visitors [657] and to middlemen who resell them in Ireland and export them abroad. The cash economy is buttressed considerably by government subsidies of many sorts and [651] by remittances from emigrant kin. Not only are income and property taxes not [427] collected in Inis Beag, but rents are extremely low, both of which conditions rep- [124] resent indirect government subsidization. Income information is as difficult to come by as data concerning pagan supernatural beliefs, disputes, and sexual atti-

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tudes and practices; for the islanders do not wish to jeopardize unemployment assistance and old age benefits, nor to be taxed in the future, and thus closely guard sources and amounts of income, even from relatives and friends.

Division of Labor

The division of labor between the sexes is more dichotomous today than it was at the turn of the century, when there was an extensive sharing of the same tasks by men and women. The latter now restrict their economic activities to the home, for the most part, especially if they must care for infants and young children. As soon as children can speak and walk, they help their mothers perform household chores and run errands, such as carrying messages and procuring groceries in the shops. But at age seven, following First Communion, boys spend less time with their mothers and come to take on small jobs which throw them more and more into contact with their older brothers, their fathers, and other men of the island. By the time young adolescents pass Confirmation and leave school, at the time of puberty, they are able to perform most adult economic tasks, and their labor is of utmost importance to the family.

Among the major jobs performed by women outside of the household round, and these by only a few younger women, are cleaning fish, carrying seaweed, planting potatoes, haying, growing vegetables, feeding and milking cattle, and caring for poultry. They also knit, crochet, ready wool for weaving, and tailor clothes for themselves and their families, as well as make sweaters, belts, and shawls for sale. In the several homes which accommodate tourists during the summer months, most of the responsibilities for their care fall on the women of the household. Men also do the tasks associated with fishing, farming, and the care of large livestock just listed, and they participate in the job of thickening wool; all of the other subsistence and income activities are exclusively male ones.

In the past, when fishing was a more practiced and laborious occupation than it is now, women not only aided men gut and cure fish, but they baited lines and did other affiliated chores as well. They also participated to a greater degree than today in collecting seaweed and in planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops of all varieties. Their involvement in the economic life of the island often demanded that they transport heavy loads manually for long distances, especially when they cared for all of the needs of both large and small livestock and aided in kelp-making. It is not difficult to comprehend why women are mystified at the complaints of their single daughters about the hardships that young married women must endure.

Most folk admit that members of the present generation work less strenuously than did those of two generations ago, when harsh landlords rather than a benevolent government intruded so importantly into their lives. There is in Inis Beag a widespread feeling of guilt among men, seldom expressed openly, about being "lazy." It is my observation that island men, on the whole, put in fewer hours of labor and expend less energy than workers in a typical industrial plant in America. Inis Beag emigrants who return from England for visits invariably

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size from fourths to quarter-acres, located along the quarter that his community fronts. As a result of past inheritance and purchase, however, five Castle villagers own plots in one or two other quarters, as do five High and two Low villagers. Before field building commenced, the most extensive and fertile soils were found on the terraces; shallow and less widespread soils were situated just south of the terrace crest, while the back of the island was, and still is, mostly limestone pavement. Landholders originally were assigned equal acreage in each of these three areas, so that no one would have an advantage over his neighbors, and this pattern still predominates. The quarters are separated from one another by high, thick stone fences which run almost the length of Inis Beag, and, from west to east, they are known as Quarter of the *Phoillín* (derivation unknown), Quarter of the Ridge of Huts (after an ancient *clochán* settlement behind High Village), Quarter of the Castle, and Quarter of the Lake; they embrace, respectively, 271, 261, 240, and 263 acres.

Fifty-nine of the 71 householders in Inis Beag hold or own land, and one of these is an absentee holder. If an individual possesses four or fewer acres, he is regarded as landless—"a man of few gardens"—and 11 men are so designated. Two as yet unresolved disputes over the possession of land when resolved will add two other householders to the landless category, unless the property is divided in some manner among all four litigants by the Irish Land Commission. The folk prefer to rent rather than to own land, so that the commission will supervise matters relating to inheritance "fairly" and with little cost to the litigants should a dispute arise. The average sized Inis Beag holding is 15.7 acres, or approximately a croggery, and 25 islanders hold this amount of land; in addition, one person has 40 acres, three 32 acres, one 28 acres, eight 24 acres, eight 20 acres, four 12 acres, and nine 8 acres. Below is a chart summing up ownership data by village:

	Landholders and Owners	*Landless Householders*	*Average Sized Holding (in acres)*
Low Village	17	9	11.0
High Village	14	1	18.2
Castle Village	15	2	19.0
Terrace Village	13	1	16.4

The disproportionate number of landless persons in Low are, for the most part, either descendants of fisherfolk who centered in that community in earlier times and did not possess land, or siblings of landholders who chose not to emigrate. They support themselves by craft work, keeping tourists, fishing, managing shops, and working for the government, among other pursuits.

Farming

There is neither legendary nor historical evidence of when soil building commenced in Inis Beag, but the process is an archaic one and is practiced in other communities along the Atlantic seaboard where appropriate seaweeds are available. Today, berween 45 and 50 percent of the land surface of the island is

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241 soil covered. There was little "field-making" at the beginning of this century, and
[731] few plots south of the terrace crest were utilized for farming. Fields on the terraces were planted yearly with potatoes and other vegetables, but in the 1920s the "eelworm" parasite invaded the island and forced the present custom of
[659] fallowing plots for at least four years. This development necessitated the creation of new fields at the back, and when the government began to subsidize field making during the 1930s, and fence construction later on, another impetus to the manu-
[114] facture of additional land was provided. Most of the literature pertaining to Inis Beag, influenced by nativism and primitivism, claims that field and fence building has proceeded for centuries (even millennia) and disavows the existence of indigenous soils.

221 222 241 The year in Inis Beag commences in February with the advent of spring, when seaweed is gathered, fields are manufactured, and crops are planted. Although some seaweed is collected in the summer and autumn and stored in "cocks" near the shore or in outbuildings for later use, most of it is cut and pulled in January
[133] and February at the time of spring tides. There is a maximum 15¾ feet difference between flood and ebb spring tides in Inis Beag, and normally submerged reefs rich in seaweed are bared three to four hours daily for two or three days twice each month. The men await a "good strand" to gather seaweed, when the tide is lowest during the daylight hours and not influenced by wave or swell action, for this is a dangerous task which sometimes demands wading in water thigh deep. The folk are amused greatly by a sequence from a noted film about them depicting a woman carrying seaweed along the coast during a raging storm; the footage was created by the producer to satisfy esthetic canons and to portray the primitive and Celtic virtues.

241 The generic term for natural fertilizers is "manure" and includes seaweed, compost, and guano. The islanders also use chemical fertilizers to some extent, particularly in areas where soils are deficient in manganese. Compost varies much in composition and may include human and animal feces, called "dung," turf ashes, and decaying vegetable matter, such as ferns and the sod "scraws" of thatched roofs
[514] being dismantled. Nowhere in the literature is the use of human manure mentioned, and the folk are extremely secretive about its use, as they also are about burning cow dung for fuel in times of emergency. Their reticence about disclos-
[654] ing these practices is a product of sexual puritanism. Young farmers are more willing than their elders to follow the advice of the Department of Agriculture agent stationed in a neighboring island, and are coming to use chemical fertilizers more commonly than was the case in the past. The islanders eschew artificial commodities which impinge on the human body, and often I have heard chemical fertilizers denounced because they supposedly are manufactured from "bones of evil persons buried in cemeteries" on the Continent, or victims of the plague centuries ago. Some farmers hold artificial fertilizers to blame for both the potato blight and the eelworm parasite.

824 Four kinds of seaweed are utilized by the folk: ribbon weed, string weed or sea thong, red or May weed, and black weed or bladder wrack. The most commonly used variety is red weed, once the major source of kelp, which is washed in
[437] the year around and is stripped of its leaves when collected. Its stems are known

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(1959-1960) Inis Beag

as "sea rods" and are accumulated by several islanders, dried, and shipped by small boat in May or June to a factory on the mainland to be processed for their iodine content. One man received 90 pounds for his sea rods in the spring of 1960. Ribbon and black weed usually are cut at the time of planting and are carried immediately to the fields, while the other two types are pulled throughout the year and stacked along the coast or in outbuildings. The most effective seaweed fertilizer is black weed, because its "sap" permeates the soil most rapidly; but it and string weed are in short supply in Inis Beag and are most available to Terrace villagers.

Any landowner can collect seaweed on the strand and along the shore bordering the western part of the common land. So much red weed washed ashore on the easily accessible beach during December of 1959 that men from all four villages gathered it during the Christmas season, when work usually is at a standstill. Along the rest of the Inis Beag coast, areas for seaweed collecting are assigned to each village and to every family holding land within the community. Low Village gathers along the west sound, although a short strip of shoreline is assigned to High; Castle and High have collection rights along the eastern portion of the common land, and they also gather from the Atlantic coast near the ends of the roads leading from their respective communities; and, Terrace obtains its seaweed along the east sound, except for areas near the lighthouse assigned to Castle families. Long ago, a portion of the Quarter of the Castle was assigned to the Quarter of the Lake, but the traditional seaweed rights near the lighthouse were maintained.

On days suited for seaweed collecting, the coastline of Inis Beag is alive with moving forms during the several hours that the tide has ebbed. Men wade out on the bared reefs to cut or pull plants, which they pile in woven sally rod baskets, called "creels," and carry to horses and asses tethered on the paths above "high water mark." Sometimes a man will lead his ass to the edge of the water and load it directly, if footing is secure, and he may be aided in the task of carrying creels by his wife and children. The weed then is transported to the fields and dried on the fences or placed directly on the "gardens;" weed which has been stored from the previous year also is spread on the plots, sometimes several weeks before seeding takes place. There is a wide difference of opinion among farmers as to whether or not seaweed should be put down dry, and, if spread, how long it should be exposed to rain before "rotting" dispels the "juices." The same differences of opinion mark the evaluation of the efficacy of various fertilizers and their use at the several stages of "setting" a garden.

One of the tasks of the agricultural agent is to test soils and advise farmers as to which kinds of seaweed and other fertilizers are best suited for their land. But he seldom is consulted, and if his advice is sought, it is more often than not disregarded. Family and village traditions still guide farming procedures to a great extent, and experimentation is a rarity. Terrace Village farmers employ all four types of seaweed, in part because it is a village custom, but also because they have access to most of the string and black weed in the island. This practice is lauded by the agent as being scientifically the most effective; however, he takes no credit for the Terrace idiosyncracy. Among other important duties performed by

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Figure 5. Improving a garden with compost unloaded on seaweed

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654 the agent are providing seed potatoes and overseeing the construction of fences, fields, reservoirs, and outbuildings subsidized by the government.

241 The average sized farm of a fourth has approximately half of its acreage in quarter- and half-acre gardens; the other half is divided fairly evenly between larger plots containing indigenous soils used for grazing and those enclosing lime-
[454] stone pavement, or "crags." Gardens are smaller in size because subsidies for their
[436] manufacture are paid according to the quarter-acre—7 pounds and 10 shillings when a potato crop is grown—and a field this size can be converted into a garden comfortably in the period of a year. Most landholders plant from a half-acre to a full acre of potatoes yearly, and it is estimated that a quarter-acre will produce,
[438] under normal weather conditions, nearly four tons of "spuds." According to the agricultural agent, the use of human manure as a fertilizer accounts for such a
[431] high yield. The amount of potatoes consumed depends, of course, on the size of the householder's family, but many farmers export surpluses the following summer before new spuds are harvested.

"Improving" refers both to developing a new garden and to enriching an old one with compost (see Fig. 5). New plots usually are manufactured in areas containing indigenous soils, so as to lessen the labor required. If a garden is to be "laid" on pavement, a much fissured area is chosen so that adequate drainage is afforded. The plot is leveled by removing protruding stones with crowbar and sledge hammer (not by throwing a huge boulder from above the head, as shown in the aforementioned film), and fissures are filled with small rocks to the extent
[333] that soil components added later will not filter down. Large stones are placed in
[654] fences which surround the field, for which the government pays the farmer, or farmers, involved in their construction 2 pounds for each 22 yards raised 4 feet. Writers describing the local milieu seldom fail to mention that fences are numer-

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ous and high in Inis Beag so as to prevent the sparse soils from being blown away by Atlantic gales; the truth of the matter is that fences serve as boundaries, are repositories for uprooted rocks that farmers, understandably, do not wish to transport long distances, and by their very construction provide a source of income. Once a field is leveled, it is spread with sand, compost, and sometimes indigenous soils carried from other areas to enrich the new garden. This is a job which is carried on the year around, and children often are pressed into service, loading creels with sand from the strand and common land and driving laden animals to the plots above.

Newly made fields can grow potatoes two years in succession before being fallowed, but old ones must lie fallow four years until the eelworm disappears. The folk, however, plant spuds in their old plots every six to ten years, when moss has accumulated to such a degree that the growth of grass sufficient for grazing and haying is impeded. The potato planting technique is known as the "ridge-and-furrow" or "lazy-bed" method on the mainland, but these terms are not used in Inis Beag. Setting a garden involves first of all constructing parallel "ridges," about 30 inches in width, the length of a field. "Ditches" are dug with a spade, and sods are "turned over" onto strips of seaweed; then more dirt is "trenched" over other seaweed, compost, guano, and chemical fertilizers placed in the center of the ridges (see Fig. 6). The whole procedure is called "manuring," and two months later the garden is again trenched with dirt distributed at the base of the sprouting vines. Between the time of seeding and harvesting, the plot is weeded by hand once or twice and sprayed two or three times with a mixture of copper sulphate and water to combat the potato blight.

Potato seeds are purchased in sacks from the agricultural agent or obtained from the previous year's crop, and it takes almost 100 pounds of seed to plant a

Figure 6. Soil being trenched in setting a garden

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kelp-making has disappeared, pig rearing has been abandoned, and fishing has become mainly a subsistence pursuit engaged in by only a small number of islanders. Hand in glove with these developments came the enlargement of arable lands and hence an increase in good pasturage, first necessitated by the intrusion of the eelworm and then stimulated by government agricultural supports. Farming became a more time consuming and lucrative occupation, as did the breeding and fattening of cattle and sheep for export, and the keeping of horses and asses expanded to accommodate the increased emphasis on farming. Thus, while the subsistence economy changed but slightly in two generations, the money economy experienced a radical alteration.

At the present time, 59 householders own one or more cattle; 56, one or more sheep; 22, one or more horses; and 58, one or more asses, among whom 8 have 2 asses and 1 a jennet. The government regulates the breeding of both cattle and horses, with the result that only one man is licensed to own a bull and the horses are mares or geldings. Cows are serviced for a 1 pound stud fee in the most inaccessible of fields, where children and tourists cannot observe the breeding of the "beasts." Most of the asses, just as the bulls and stallions, are castrated, but in this case to prevent them from kicking down fences and braying excessively when sexually aroused. Whereas almost all of the horses and asses and a few cattle have been imported from the mainland, the sheep population is Inis Beag sired. For the most part, cattle are grazed on fallowing plots, the few goats on crags at the back of the island, and other livestock on indigenous pasturage.

Cattle owners usually possess a "milch cow," a yearling, and a calf, and cows and bullocks are sold at two years of age. When a milch cow becomes old and "dried up," it either is fattened and sold or, if the price on the mainland is low, butchered and eaten by the householder and his family, usually between Allhallows and Christmas. "Cattle jobbers" visit the island to purchase cows and bullocks, and in 1960 they were paying between 60 and 80 pounds per beast. Excitement prevails on the strand on days when cattle are shipped off. Each struggling animal is pushed out into the sea by a group of men and then pulled to a canoe by a rope attached around its neck; its head is held over the stern transom of the *curach* for the trip to the steamer, where it is hoisted from the water and swung high over the deck and into a hold. Sometimes an islander is forced by circumstances to import a calf, and in 1960 the purchase price of calves at the fair in a nearby port was approximately 20 pounds; a colt cost about 50 pounds and an ass 5.

Probably the most striking difference between cattle rearing on the mainland and in Inis Beag is that island cows are not stabled, but forage and are milked throughout the year in the fields. Between November and March, they are pastured south of the terrace crest on fallowing and the more luxuriant of the indigenous plots, fed hay and rye carried to them from barns and outbuildings, and watered by bucket from neighboring springs which are swollen from winter rains. Men and boys care for their needs during this period, and often spend as many as three hours walking out and back to the pastures twice each day. With the coming of spring, cows are moved to fields on the terraces where women and children can feed and milk them, or men, who are now entering on the busy agricultural and

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duced trawlers and other types of fishing vessels and financed their purchase by islanders of the region, sent instructors to teach fishermen how to use the new boats and gear, set up curing and storage facilities in the islands, facilitated the shipping of fish to mainland markets, and attempted to regulate these markets so as to ensure maximum profits for the folk. These efforts failed for the most part in Inis Beag, and today the men fish from *curach*, much as did their grandfathers. The continuing effort of the government to improve fishing in the area is reflected in instruction in modern fishing techniques at a school in a nearby island, and the successful operation of a number of government financed trawlers and other fishing boats from there.

The islanders consider fish from the sea, which are netted, more palatable and healthier to eat than those caught with lines and trawls, fresh water fish, and fish which have been cured or frozen. Fish taken on lines, because they bleed, and those enmeshed in trawls, because they suffocate, are thought to suffer in taste and nourishment, as do those which are treated artificially for sale; and fresh water fish are believed to be unhealthy to eat because they feed on refuse thrown into lakes and rivers rather than on natural foods. Some folk exclude even mackerel from their diet, since these fish "swim on the surface and eat everything dirty afloat." We already have noted that Inis Beag elders prefer seaweed to chemical fertilizers; the preference for netted fish which feed on natural foods to fresh water fish and mackerel which are contaminated is another example of a recurrent cultural theme—the positive valuation of natural objects and the negative valuation of artificial ones which come in contact with the human body. Other manifestations of this theme are the emphasis placed on folk medicines and the distrust of medicines prescribed by nurse and doctor, the belief that certain foods will assure health and combat specific illnesses, and the fear of piped water and canned foods. I often was told that I could improve my eyesight by giving up my glasses and rubbing dew on my eyelids, or by walking along the seashore to allow the wind and spray to penetrate my eyeballs.

Over 30 varieties of fish are caught off Inis Beag, some with lines of varying length and number of hooks, others in the four types of nets, and a few with both lines and nets. Most important of the fish are: ling, cod, bream, gurnet, haddock, and autumn mackerel caught with lines; plaice, turbot, rock fish, and pollack both netted and taken on lines; and herring and spring mackerel captured in special nets. Trammel and drag nets are used in addition to herring and mackerel nets, and the most commonly used baits are gurnet, haddock, conger eel, bream, herring, and limpets. Fishing techniques vary considerably, as do the times of the year when particular kinds of fish are available, the localities that they frequent, and the baits which are most effective for each variety. Fishing crews form at different times of the year, often to fish in certain areas for specific fish. They are composed of both kin and close friends, and they tend to alter in membership from year to year as other activities intrude.

Before I leave the subject of fishing, I wish to correct three commonly held misconceptions concerning Inis Beag men: they are all skilled seamen; because they spend much of their time at sea they are of necessity able swimmers; and

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361 It is apparent from the size of these settlements that some such term as hamlet might be more appropriate than village, but I have chosen to follow island usage. Within each village, no house is further than 50 yards from its nearest neighbor, some even sharing the same gable, and a myriad of paths serve to link single and grouped dwellings with a main road.

184 Although the traditions of Inis Beag and islands in its vicinity can be designated as a subculture of the Irish system taken as a whole, nevertheless there are marked differences in custom between them. One might suppose that cultural variation would be slight in an island as small and stable as Inis Beag, but [829] the remarkable fact is that there are differences among the four villages. The folk [628] are well aware of inter-village, inter-island, and island-mainland cultural variability, and they also possess a well defined image of their own way of life. At this point, I would like to examine the attitudes of the people toward their own communities, Inis Thiar, the mainland, themselves, and outsiders who visit or live among them.

829 High and Castle Villages attract the fewest opinions. The inhabitants of 628 the former are accused of arriving late at island affairs, especially to mass in the 184 chapel so close at hand, and dwellers in the latter of keeping ferocious dogs which [231] bark at night and molest visitors. Until recently, each Castle household had from two to four dogs, and it was possible for those living in Low to know when a visitor making a night visit had arrived in Castle by the outcry of the animals. [512] Castle people, like those in Terrace, milk their cows earlier in the day than do [823] other islanders, and since both settlements are located on the upper terraces and command exceptional views of the mainland coast and sea around, the dwellers in each claim that their panorama is the most inspiring.

829 The numerous attitudes toward Low and Terrace Villages mostly reflect 628 their positions in the island and resultant differential acculturation; generally 184 speaking, the local culture becomes more traditional as one moves eastward from 177 Low, the jetty, and the strand. It is often said that Terrace folk "are strangers to 178 the rest of us" and resemble the inhabitants of Inis Thiar, whom many writers and [342] scientists claim are the most traditional of Irish peasants. More cottages are [461] thatched and the indigenous costume is more in evidence in Terrace than elsewhere, and the villagers there are the earliest risers and hardest workers and tend to arrive early for events, in contradistinction to their High neighbors. Families in Terrace are considered more closely knit and cooperative and the people more [275] self-reliant than those in the other communities. The men spend less time in the pubs, do not need drink to "give them courage" to sing and dance, and are livelier and more extroverted at parties. Not only do Terrace folk believe that their village is best located as to beauty of land and seascape, but they claim that it is quieter [241] and the air is healthier there than elsewhere in Inis Beag. Another Terrace custom often cited is that of farmers using all four types of seaweed as fertilizers and setting their gardens in the same manner; farmers in the other settlements use [421] only two or three kinds of seaweed and set their gardens in a variety of ways. Lastly, the practice of seeking wrack is most prevalent among Terrace men. The freighter ran aground near Terrace, and the men there were said to have acquired more salvage than other islanders as a result of their being close to the ship and

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especially outside of Ireland. Four islanders have entered orders—two priests and two nuns—and have brought their families not only prestige but an aura of sanctity; it is believed by the folk that God bestows grace on his earthly representatives and on their kin as well. Even the king is thought to receive some measure of supernatural support for the period of time that he spent during his youth, as is rumored, as a servant at Maynooth Seminary.

The folk rank one another according to their ability to row the *curach*, fish, farm, knit, and perform other economic tasks, although such talents do not bring the prestige that they once did. I often have heard individuals chaffed publicly, sometimes even to their faces, for possessing less than average skills, and many persons have told me privately that they admire or envy the skills of others and wish that they themselves were more adept. A man who owns land in the quarter of another village told me that he works painstakingly in setting a garden there, since his efforts will be appraised by the alien villagers and pitilessly condemned if found wanting. Women gain most of their prestige through performing well the tasks ascribed to them by the division of labor. The economic skills of individuals who lived in the past are lauded more than those of contemporary islanders, reflecting the shift of emphasis in the prestige system; this is far more the case with singing, dancing, and storytelling, as well as with the display of strength and courage. Institutionalized storytelling had disappeared from Inis Beag before 1960, although raconteurs of note still hold forth in the pubs and at small social gatherings. These persons, and the several who excel at singing and dancing, are held in high repute. Probably the best liked of the islanders is a man of 72 years who is admired for his wit, charm, friendliness, and agile step dancing. When drinking in the pubs, he enjoys telling anecdotes about his past experiences, singing and dancing, expressing a simulated sadness at his bachelor estate, and poking sly fun at the behavior of certain folk. Although he is landless and thought to be overly lazy, he is ranked high in the prestige hierarchy because of his esthetic talents and occasional *joie de vivre*. His recluse brother of opposite temperament remarked sadly, "Even the stones of the island know him, but no one knows me." Another landless man, now deceased, who was about the same age, enjoyed high status because he was a traditional storyteller, was noted as a young man for his exceptional strength and athletic and rowing prowess, had spent a decade in the United States, and by reading had educated himself well above the level of most of the folk.

Stories abound concerning once famous men of strength and courageous deeds in Inis Beag and the surrounding region. These anecdotes are recounted more during the summer months than the winter ones, when tourists are within earshot and can be suitably impressed. Acts of courage performed by folk in the past mostly deal with mishaps which occurred to crews while fishing or traveling to and from nearby islands or the mainland. The feats of strength performed by former athletes—such as putting the shot, long jumping, and "throwing the half-hundred"—are well within the realm of possibility, but other feats usually are grossly exaggerated. Examples of the latter are the man who, grasping the base of the front leg of a chair in which sat a person weighing 11 stones (154 pounds), lifted it with one hand, also the man who raised over his head "with ease" a struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight.

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the major source of their livelihood; production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a simple technology, using the digging stick, spade, and scythe as primary implements; the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to their laws; the people have long been exposed to urban influences and have borrowed cultural forms from other rural areas on the mainland, integrating them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under English rule for centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of dependence on—yet hostility toward—government which continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those found in most other peasant communities are low death and illiteracy rates and bilateral, rather than unilineal, descent (although inheritance is patrilineal).

Inis Beag culture also characterizes people of nearby islands, and the traditions of the several together might be regarded as forming a subculture of the total Irish system. Many island customs are shared with rural peasants on the mainland (where numerous regional subcultures exist), and some are part of a broader European matrix. The island has experienced considerable cultural change since the establishment of the Congested Districts Board (forerunner of the Gaeltacht) in 1891 and the growth of tourism in this century. But conditions there still approximate those which must have prevailed two generations ago, and earlier, throughout this region of peasant Ireland.

Inis Beag has a population of approximately 350 persons living in seventy-one "cottages" distributed among four settlements, called "villages." Bordering a "strand" and a large tract of common land on the northeastern side of the island are a series of limestone terraces, separated by water-bearing shales and faced by small cliffs, on which the villages are situated. Most of the arable land is found on this side, where the shales have been broken down by weathering and alien soils deposited by wind and by ice of the Weichsel glacier. Over many generations, the islanders have deepened these soils and created new soils on rock surfaces by adding seaweed, sand, and human manure. On the southwestern side of Inis Beag, known as the "back of the island," limestone pavements slope rather evenly, almost as the gentle dip of the strata, from the crest of the highest terrace to the sea a mile away. The bared surfaces are intersected in all directions by crevices,

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834 bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and
[759] sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)
[155]

It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health"
158 reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria.
751 In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with
[291] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear
[834] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism
[753] and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

514 Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evac-
827 uation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and
[363] animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that ha-
825 bitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten.
[562] Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at
[273] parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting
* [241] the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed
237 feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the main-
372 land, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is
514 burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another
283 custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the
[462] secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

* 831 Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are
522 the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood
[154] by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore
[123] sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is